

DIALOGUE

138
BETWEEN A

Baptist and a Churchman,

Occasioned by the BAPTISTS opening a New
Meeting-House in BIRMINGHAM,

WARWICKSHIRE.

Wherein is Contained

A DEFENCE of the FIRST PART;

AND A

VINDICATION

OF THE

Rights of Christian Ministers.

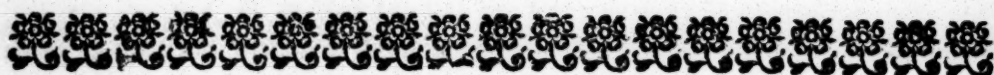
PART the SECOND.

By a Consistent Christian.

*Blessed is the Man who doth meditate honest Things by
his Wisdom, and who reasoneth of Holy Things by his
Understanding. Ecclesiast. xiv. 21.*

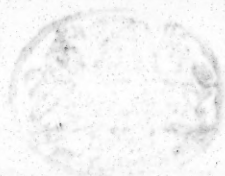
L O N D O N.

Printed for J. ROBERTS in *Warwick-Lane*, and Sold by
the Booksellers in *London* and the *Counties*.



Advertisement,

THE Author of the Dialogue is, in this *Second Part*, introduced sometimes as a *Third Person*; which Change of Persons, it is hoped, will be no Disadvantage to the Understanding of the Reader.



A

DIALOGUE, &c.



Meet you, Sir, with Pleasure; having waited a good while for this Opportunity of talking over with you several Articles of our former Conversation.

C. I am no less pleas'd to see my honest Friend; am ready to enter upon any Topicks which may be useful and entertaining to our selves and the Company: I hope also, we meet one another with that *Fairness of Mind* which will qualify us for attending to just Reasoning, and render us open to Conviction. But why the old Subjects over again?

B. To be free with you; I have been reproached for making a weak Defence of our Principles and Cause, Ministers and Friends; and think I am better furnished than I was before. Yet, as I desire nothing more than to *find out Truth*, on which Side soever it lie, you shall find me ready to allow your Arguments their due weight, and to give up every Principle that shall appear to be an Error. And I hope to find the same Temper in you.

C. Tho' I think you are unjustly reproached, and that you suggested Arguments as good and strong as any of your Seconds have produced for you; nor did expose your Self and your Cause, as they have done, by coarse Language, uncharitable Censures, and a heap of Absurdities; yet as *every Thing* that might be offer'd, and perhaps the *best Things*, do not always occur in Conversation, nor can be crowded into an

Seeker of sacred Truth, as it is in *Christ*, or as revealed in the Gospel, I shall with Patience and Pleasure attend to whatever you propose. But pray, whence these new Recruits?

B. Partly from my own Reflections, and what I have gathered up in Conversation; and partly from two Pamphlets wrote in answer to the *Title Page* of the Dialogue, and to the *Dialogue* itself, and others, which I suppose you have seen.

C. I know not what may have risen up in *your own Mind*, which, tho' not very clear, is, I believe, honest; nor what may have been suggested in the *various Company* you mingle with: But I find nothing very formidable, and many Things very *weak*, very *unfair*, and very *gross*, in the Pieces to which you refer. Sensible Men look on them as beggarly Performances, deserving only Neglect and Contempt; and that the Dialogue, in its main Parts, remains not only unanswered, but unanswerable.

B. That will be farther tried in the Progress of our Discourse.

C. I heartily join Issue with you. But before we try the Cause, tho' it is not very material to inquire after the Author of a worthless Tract, you'll indulge me the Curiosity to ask, who wrote that *Grubstreet* Production, The *Answer to the Title Page*, &c?

B. Truly, I never tho't it worth my while to inquire much after him; but some fix it upon a Gentleman down Street.

C. What, old Father Sly-Boots?

B. You can't forbear your Drollery; he is a very grave Man.

C. I wish he was as *honest*, as he is grave, as *sincere*, as he is demure; and wou'd become as *useful* as he has been subtle and mischievous.

B. I'll not answer for every Man's Character, who makes Pretentions to Religion, and reckons himself a Saint. But to the Matter in Hand.

As you are supposed to have publish'd our Conversation to the World, and to be the Author of the

Dialogue, I need not tell you, that the very FORM, of that Piece is objected to, as being wrote in a *Dialogue Way*, which you have made Subservient to your own Purposes.

C. When a Man is once obnoxious to a certain Set of People, the Bigots and Furies of any Party, the most innocent or laudable Things he can say, and the most innocent or worthy Actions he can do, will be cavilled at and perverted.

Have not the best, as well as the worst Writers, wrote in this Manner, down from *Solomon, Plato, Aesop*, to honest *John Bunian*? Had not the Author a Right to choose his own Way, as much as a Man has to shoot in his own Bow? If he has, by Partiality and Misrepresentations, abused that Way of Writing, he is answerable for it; but this does not appear by *one Instance* yet pointed out. It is easier to *accuse*, than to *prove*.

B. As the *Dialogue-way* of writing is Familiar and Entertaining, as well as Instructive, I had no Objection to it; nor do I blame you of doing *me* much Injustice in the Argument. But why are we described as NEW BAPTISTS?

C. Tho' *You* are my old Acquaintance, yet your Party are called *New Baptists* on Account of their newly appearing in Town; and in Distinction from a much wiser and better Set of Baptists, who had a Meeting in Town before.

B. You are represented as forward to ingage in Controversy with our Party; as making the first Attack; and doing it in a violent Manner.

C. You know very well, that your own Preachers first founded the Alarm, and began, with great Vehemence and little Sense, to abuse their Neighbouring Ministers and Fellow Christians, without any Provocation; and did it in the Pulpit too; and went on a long Time uttering their Errors and Absurdities in the boldest Manner, before any publick Notice was taken of them.

And tho' they had been drawing their Weapons

from Satan's Forge, and really shooting the Arrows of Damnation against their Brethren, who have fully as good a Title to Christianity and Salvation as themselves; yet when these abused, condemned Christians only appear in their own Defence, it is resented with the utmost Impatience, and returned with a Flood of Defamation.

Had the Gentleman you point at, been fond of Controversy, He had not bore with so much Wisdom and Patience, the Torrent of foul Language and abusive Treatment, which, for many Years, has been so plentifully employed against him by unthinking Zealots in Town and Country, in the Pulpit and in private Conversation.

B. But if you wou'd meddle with a quiet inoffensive People; why with so much Banter and Railery, reproaching Persons and Principles in a mean and unhandsome Manner?

C. There is in Town a Body of quiet, peaceable, charitable *Baptists*; whom no Man, as far as I know, molested, or attempted to expose; or envied them the Liberty, which all peaceable Subjects have a Right to, of imbracing and propagating what they believe is religious Truth; and of worshipping God, according to the Dictates of their own Understandings, Consciences or Reasoning Faculties.

But this *new Set* came with the Trumpet of War in their Mouths; utter whole Cargoes of Confusion, Nonsense and Error; usurp God's Throne, by pronouncing no less than Damnation against all around them, who cannot believe their humane and contradictory Doctrines: And all this with a Theatrical Behaviour, an Indecency and Ridiculousness of Action*.

Was it not the Duty of every sensible Man, and of every Christian Minister to expose these Follies, to confute their Errors, and to guard the more tho'tless and unwary against so dangerous Corruptions. If

* It is also reported that they tie up their Church Members by a Number of Unscriptural, Uncharitable and Unrighteous Canons, which they dare not publish.

this be done with Justice; the Meanness and Scandal lieth upon the Accusers, who have not found one indecent Paragraph in the Dialogue; nor, I think, can do it: Yet am I free to own the Truth of a great Author's Observation, "That a Man has much ado" to keep within the Bounds of Moderation, when "he thinks himself oblig'd to censure a violent Zeal"* If in any Instance I have exceeded these Bounds, I shall, I hope, be ready to acknowledge my Offence.

RIDICULE DEFENDED.

B. You must own that in several Paragraphs, you have imploy'd a good deal of Satire, Rallery and Ridicule, and indeavoured to make our Ministers appear Ridiculous, as well as our Doctrines monstrous.

C. Your Doctrines I have *proved* to be monstrous, and therefore justly call them so. Nor have I *made* your Preachers ridiculous, but only shewed that they *make themselves* so. This is not exposing or reproaching *Persons*, but *Things*; Things which deserve and need to be exposed. For, Pray, what more proper Way can be taken than to ridicule *Ridiculous Things*? Have not the wisest, holiest and gravest Preachers used this Remedy, for Instance, *Micaiah*, 1 *Kings* 22. 25. *Elijah* 1 *K.* 18. 27. *Job* 12. 2. *St. Paul* 1 *Cor.* 4. 8, 10?

Have not the best Writers defended it? Asserting that Rallery is more successful in destroying Superstition and Folly, than serious Argument: That *Religious Impertinences* and *Religious Follies*, being most obstinate, are deaf to the still Voice of *Reason*, tho' Divine, but dreads the brisker Air of *Rallery*, and cannot stand the Dint of Laughter; that *Religion* above all Things, ought to be *Rational*, and that nothing ridiculous belongs to it. †

However I promise, that when your Preachers shall obtain an Act of Parliament, as the Friars in *Sir Tho.*

* *Brant's Hist.* B. 25. † See *Alkibla*. P. II.

Ridiculum acri

fortius & melius magnas plerumq; secat Res.

Hor. L. 1. S. 10.

Instructive Mirth, mixt with a waggish Sneer.

Doth nick Men's Follies more than a Severe.

More's Time did a *Bull* from the Pope, requiring that no Body shou'd jeer them, under the Penalty of being hang'd for it; Or, when they shall cease to make themselves ridiculous, I will laugh at them no longer.

B. Ours are not the only Preachers who are guilty this Way; there are some reckon'd top Men, who, upon your Principles, and by your Rules, must pass for Pulpit-Comedians. As for our late Minister, he has, I think, been edified by the *Dialogue*, and began to reform his *Manner*. But any thing may be turn'd into Ridicule by a Man of a ludicrous Genius; nor is it becoming to jest with so sacred Things as Religion.

C. When we laugh at the Church-Fopperies, or other holy Fooleries of the *Roman* Priests; they call this Profaneness, and Laughing at Religion: but Protestants shou'd be wiser. Have I treated any thing with Ridicule, which is not Ridiculous; or, have I done it without good Humour and good Manners?

B. But serious People think a little more *Gravity* wou'd have become both you and the Subject.

C. No Creature is more grave than an *Afs*; yet no more religious with all his Gravity, than an *Ape* with all his Levity. A great Author* observes, that some People are so *Sour*, they can allow no *Jests*; others so *Dull*, they can indure nothing that is *Sharp*; some are as much afraid of any thing that is *Quick* and *Lively*, as a Mad-dog is of Water.

With what grave Formality did one reverend Assembly decree *Transubstantiation*? And another burn to Death *Jerome* and *Huss*! Men may be grave, yet not *honest*; grave, while picking your Pockets; grave, while robbing you of your Understandings. On the other hand, may not Men use a little *Banter*, and yet be serious, sincere, upright and honest? Were not *Tillotson* and *Barrow* serious in bantering the Church of *Rome* into their Senses, when their grave Priests had Stole them away?

The *Capuchins* at *Rome* are such everlasting Thunderers, that they fright the Dogs out of the Church; their Expressions and Gestures are all Comical: Bp. Burnet saw one hug and caress an old wooden Crucifix in the Pulpit, as tenderly as a Man wou'd his Mistress; tho' he took Care first to blow off the Dust*. Would a little *Satire* be out of place on such a Subject?

B. On this Article you are represented as setting up for a Master of Ceremonies, and Director of the Stage.

C. When Ministers turn Pulpits into *Dancing-rooms*, and act *Postures* there, it is very fit they shou'd be put under the Care of a *Posture-Master*. And if they think this Office either too high or too low for me, I will recommend to them *Quintilian*, *Cicero*, *Rapin*, the Archbishop of *Cambray*, who will inform these Pedants and *Posture-makers*, that there is as much Difference between the Action becoming the *Pulpit*, and That fit only for the *Stage*, as between a *Christian-Minister* and a *Merry-Andrew*.

St. Paul perhaps, by your Advocates, will be reckon'd a Censor of the Stage, for recommending *Gracefulness* and *Decency* in Speech and Action. But Men, whose Discourses want Sense and Argument, Life and Eloquence, must make up these little Defects with the Talents they have.

I hope you will by this Time allow, that the Observations in *Pag. 3, 4, 5, 6.* of the *Dialogue* remain unshaken; and might, you know, be supported by Instances and Facts, were it needful, or cou'd be useful.

B. I profess, I did not think you cou'd have said so much in Defence of *Satire*, *Rallery* and *Ridicule*: Yet

* The Preachers here (at *Rome*) generally speaking, are Makers of wry Mouths and ugly Faces; all their Motions are extravagant Agitations of the Body,——Their Discourses have no Strength.——They Bawl, they Torment themselves.——Their Pulpits are like Balconies, where they run about with a great deal of Heat and Noise; but there is neither Sense nor Reason in all this. They are perfect Strangers to that Admirable Art of Pronunciation, Which, by an agreeable and well ordered mixture of Softness and Vehemency, does at once charm, move and ravish the Souls of the Hearers.

Misson's Voyages Vol. II.
Burnet's Letters.

I believe it does not go down very well with some serious People amongst *your own* Friends; and it has very much provoked many of ours.

C. A learned Writer * observeth. " There never was any Reformation in the World, (in *Doctrines* or *Practises*) at which Abundance of People were not disturb'd." But as this Disturbance is groundless, I hope the Storm raised by *your* Friends will at length subside; and that the Uneasiness of *Mine* will wear off, when they see that the Method I have taken is the *propereſt* in it ſelf, and, of all others, the likeliest to cure that vicious Action and Gesture in the Pulpit, which has no Relation to Religion; and which has a Tendency to give wise Men a low Opinion of the Preacher, and an Aversion to the Things preached. If intelligent Christians are banished from an Assembly, and the *Enthusiasts* and *Starers* only left, will this be any Credit to the Gospel and its Ministers?

B. What you have offered giveth me Satisfaction; and I must confess, I am more pleased when I see a Man behave with what you call a *Dignity of Action*, than practising a number of *Gesticulations*, no way suitable to the Place he is in, or to the Work he is about. And it is but here and there a Man amongst us very guilty this Way; who, I hope, will learn, after their wiser Brethren, to Address themselves to Mens *Understandings* by solid Arguments; and to move their *Hearts* by warm Perswasions; and to forbear all those little and indecent Actions which strike the *Imaginations* of the Vulgar only, but are offensive to every judicious Hearer.

UNCHARITABLENESS, who Guilty?

I now proceed to what, I think, more concerns you, and which perhaps you will not so easily get clear of; and that is, the Charge of *Uncharitableness*, and of an unchristian Temper, and hereby of Inconsistency with your assumed Character, and your Charge against others.

* *Stennet's Answer to Ruffen.*

C. I own it difficult, in the Heat of Disputation, for a Man to guard his Tongue and Pen from every rash Censure; And if I have been guilty of Uncharitableness, Injustice, and Inconsistency with my self, when the Paragraphs are cited, and the Accusation proved, I hope I shall own it, and ask Pardon; but this, as far as I know, is not attempted.

I have indeed laughed at the *Follies* of this People; and leave the World to judge, whether hereby I have done them wrong. I have also represented their *Opinions* as monstrous, dangerous and pernicious Errors; inconsistent with the Gospel, and subversive of the *Faith* once, and at first, *delivered* to the Saints; I think I have *proved* them to be so, and intend farther to do it.

Yet I have all along treated them in the General, and expressly owned them as a Well-meaning People, tho' Whimsical; as *Disciples of Christ*, tho' Weak-headed ones, and very much corrupted by *unsound Notions*. I am ready to do them any good Office, and in particular to lead them out of the Dark; and hope I can forgive the injurious Treatment I have received from them, and others of their Principles and Spirit, both before and since the publishing of the Dialogue; And all this in perfect Consistency with bantering their *Foibles*, and confuting their *Errors*.

For of your Opinions I may say as *Baxter* does of *Popery*; tho' they are *Poyson*, yet some Constitutions are so good, that the mortal Effects are thereby prevented.

The same Tho't is ingeniously represented by the late Mr. *Grove* * in this manner, " It was promised
" by our Saviour to his first Disciples, *that if they drank*
" *any deadly Thing, it shou'd not hurt them*; We may
" say something like this of the pernicious Doctrines
" imbraced by some good Men; they imbrace them,
" yet are not hurt by them; are, it may be, useful to
" others, amongst whom they propagate their *Vir*.

“ *tues* and *Mistakes*: But then, as in the former
 “ Case, what the Disciples drank was nevertheless
 “ *Deadly* in its own Nature, for the mortal Opera-
 “ tion of it was prevented by Miracle; so here,
 “ Men’s escaping unhurt themselves, and being the
 “ Instruments of good to others, is no Argument of
 “ the *Innocence*, much less of the *Usefulness* of their
 “ Notions; they may be exceeding pernicious in their
 “ own Nature for all that; only an honest Heart,
 “ and the Virtue of some excellent Truths, like a vi-
 “ gorous Antidote, happily counter-act them.”

The Kind and Degree of *Uncharitableness* principally charged upon these *New-Baptists* and their Adherents, is, their proscribing at once from the Name and Privileges of *Christians*, pronouncing them Hereticks, and sentencing to Damnation, all their Neighbours round them, Men who believe not only the Articles of the Apostles Creed, but the whole Gospel of Jesus Christ, and who live according to it; and all this, for not believing, what they cannot possibly believe,
 “ That there are three Persons each supreme God,
 “ and yet all three but one supreme God. That God
 “ has absolutely decreed Men to Salvation and Dam-
 “ nation, without any Regard to their Behaviour
 “ here. That God requires Impossibilities of Men,
 “ and then damns them for not doing what it was
 “ impossible they shou’d do:” And other such monstrous and blasphemous Doctrines.

B. You represent Things in a very shocking manner: Tho’ I cannot clear our People of all rash Censures and Opinions; yet, I hope, few of us carry the Matter thus far, and that our Doctrine is not chargeable with these horrid Consequences.

C. That your Scheme is loaded with these and more Abominations, I have already proved, and shall give farther Proof of it. So that you must either give up your Principles, or abide by the Consequences of them. And that some of your Preachers, and others, who wou’d be reckoned very good Christians, are guilty of this sort of *Uncharitableness*, which is one

of the Marks of Anti-Christ, appears from almost all the late Writers on your Side of the Question. I might instance in *W---d*, *G---se*, *Sl--fs*, &c. as well as in Authors of less Note.

B. I must own, I have been, grieved to find many uncharitable Passages in some Writings on our Side, which must prove Mill-stones about the Neck of such Books, which will for ever sink them in the Esteem of all sober Readers; and will give our Adversaries great Advantage: I dare not thus *talk wickedly*, tho' for God and Truth. *Job 13. 7.*

The CHURCH-MAN VINDICATED.

And the Right of Private Judgment asserted, tho' it contradicts the Publick Judgment.*

On this Head of *Uncharitableness* I give up our Writers and Friends; who, with more Justice, censure you for assuming the Character of a CHURCH-MAN, and at the same time sapping the Foundation of the Church, by giving up, or overthrowing some of her great Articles. This is judged an Imposition on the World, and an Abuse of Character.

C. On this Head I think I am very safe. May not a *Writer of Dialogues* introduce what Speakers he thinks best answer his Design, so that they speak in Character, and that the Writer keep in View the main Point, namely, exposing Folly, Vice and Error; and propagating Truth, Right and Virtue?

B. This is the chief Branch of the Charge, that you speak *out of Character*, by asserting Doctrines inconsistent with the Articles of your own Church; as I cou'd easily make appear, if needful.

C. What, can't I be a *Church-man*, unless I cease to be a *Christian*! The BIBLE, the BIBLE, says the great *Chillingworth*, is the Religion of Protestants, agreeable to our Sixth Article. Whatever Veneration I have for the Establishment, for our Clergy, Articles, Canons, Liturgy, &c. I have a greater for my *Bible*;

* See more of this hereafter.

and will sooner give up all the Humane Articles and Creeds in the World, than give up my *Bible*.

I am no more chargeable with Unfaithfulness and Insincerity, than the Body of our Clergy, who make not the *Church-Articles*, but the *Inspired Scriptures* the Standard of their Doctrine.

If they are hamper'd with Oaths and Subscriptions, I heartily wish them, and all Christian Ministers freed from such Anti-christian Incumbrances. And if our Church Articles assert the Sufficiency of the *Scriptures* as a Standard and Object of Faith, and yet contain any unscriptural Propositions, I am not chargeable with this Inconsistency; it is an essential Flaw to be found in most Confessions of Faith.

Our Clergy, I own are under a Yoke, which I wonder how they bear; nor have your Dissenting Teachers any great Reason to boast of their Liberty; in Regard, if, in preaching what they believe is the Truth of God and Christ, they depart but a Hairs breadth from their idolized Formularies, they are exposed to the Rage of the People, and in danger of losing their Stipends: for, as there are Fools of all Professions, so there are Bigots on all Sides.

Your own Eyes and Ears can tell you, how, for no other Crime than adhering to *his Bible*, in opposition to humane Forms, the supposed Writer of the Dialogue has been treated with the coarsest Language by the Pens of paltry Scriblers, and by the Tongues of ill-manner'd Christians.

B. It is not, Sir, for cleaving to the Bible, that you, or any others are deemed and called *Heathens, Deists* and *Apostates*, &c. (Words I do not much like) but for disbelieving and opposing Articles and Creeds so agreeable to the Scriptures, and drawn up by Men of great Learning, Gravity, and Piety; which have been always esteemed *Forms of sound Words*, and the Faith delivered to the Saints.

C. Can a Man be a *Heathen*, who believeth, and worshippeth the one living and true God? Can he be a *Deist*, who believeth in the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

Can he be an *Apostate* from Articles, Confessions and Catechisms, several Propositions in which, since he studied and understood them, he never did believe?

Pray, what is the Difference between abusing and persecuting a Man for cleaving to his Bible; and treating him so for rejecting Articles he cannot find in his Bible? Are our *Church-Articles*, or your *Assemblies Catechism* the Faith ONCE delivered to the Saints? Is it not Knavery and Hypocrisy in Men of Learning to make any such Pretences, and thereby abuse simple Readers, by falsely accusing those as departing from the *Truths of God*, and the *Faith of Christ*, who only doubt of, or deny the *Doctrines of Men*?

I acknowledge our *Articles* and your *Catechisms* are *Forms of sound Words*, as far as they agree with the Holy Scriptures, and are to be stood to against all Opposition; and so is the *Dialogue* it self, a very *sound Form* of Words, as far as it agreeth with the Bible; and no farther wou'd I defend it.

But if any *Assembly* or *Convocation* shou'd meet to draw up Articles, Creeds, Confessions, with an Intention to make them *Tests of Orthodoxy*; and shou'd oblige, under Temporal Penalties, Loss of Reputation, Estate, Liberty, Capacity of Usefulness, their Brethren and Neighbours to subscribe, or profess to believe them; tho' this be done with all the *Learning* and *Gravity* in the World, I shall always pronounce it *Folly*; and not exceedingly admire the *Judgment* or *Piety* of those who shall defend them, or who weakly call, exposing such a flaming Instance of Ecclesiastical Tyranny, Insolence, Rudeness or Indecency. How comes it, that the learned, pious and candid Mr. *Neal* has no more good Manners towards the Reverend Assembly of Divines at *Westminster*, than honestly to confess they were guilty of very gross Faults, and that a *Persecuting Spirit* was not the least of 'em! *

It is a just and ingenious Observation made by no

* *Neal's Hist. of Purit.* vol. 3d. See also *Whitlock's Memoirs* p. 68.

mean Writer † “ That when Clergymen and Divines
 “ are in *Councils* and *Synods*, they too easily believe,
 “ that their *Grandeur, Reverence, Names* and *Num-*
 “ *bers* must give them the Reputation of being Or-
 “ thodox, and in the Right; and will warrant them
 “ to defame him as Erroneous, Heretical, Schismatical,
 “ Singular, Factious or Proud, who presumeth
 “ to contradict them, or to know more than they.----
 “ And so our *hard Studies*, and darling *Truth* must
 “ make us as *Owls*, or reproached Persons, amongst
 “ those *Reverend Brethren*, who are ignorant at *ea-*
 “ *sier Rates*, and who find it a far *safer* kind of Life,
 “ to think and say as the *most*, or best esteemed do,
 “ than to purchase Reproach and Obloquy too dear-
 “ ly. And the *religious People* of every Party will
 “ say as their Teachers.----It will be their House-
 “ talk, Street-talk, if not their Church-talk. *That such*
 “ *an one is a Dangerous, Erroneous Man*, because he
 “ is not so ignorant and erroneous as they.”

Thus bravely does the Man talk and write, who
 was one of the first in *Great Britain*, who durst at-
 tempt to break the Chains of Bigotry and mental
 Slavery.

No Man, you know Friend, ever scruples *counting*
Money after his Neighbour, or his Father, tho' ever
 so learned and honest; yet, as *Lactantius* says, * “ Such
 “ is Men's Reverence for Antiquity, that the very
 “ *Examination* of it is counted a heinous Crime.-----
 “ But seeing God hath given to every Man a Portion
 “ of Reason, to search out Truth; he denieth him-
 “ self to have this Gift, who, without Examination,
 “ approveth the Doctrines of his Ancestors; and, like
 “ a Sheep, followeth the Footsteps of his Leaders.”

Seeing then the *Scriptures* are the Standard, by
 which not only all private Opinions, but all human

† *Baxter*. in his Dying Thoughts.

* *Tantaque est Autoritas Vetustatis, ut inquirere in eam, scelus esse ducatur. — Dedit omnibus Deus pro virili Portione Sapientiam; — Sapientiam sibi adimunt, qui sine ullo judicio inventa majorum probant, & ab aliis, peculum more, ducantur.*

Composures ought to be tried; instead of making these Human Forms a Standard, under Pretence that they are *agreeable to the Scriptures*; and by which it is allowed they may and must be tried; Is it not better at once to spring out of all these Intanglements, and clasp the *Bible* to our Hearts, saying, "Here is the only *Rule, Standard, Test*, and Decision of Truth and Faith for me; this only will I abide by, and set up to try all others by?" *

No doubt the Council of *Nice* and the Synod of *Dort* consisted of learned, grave and pious Men----- notwithstanding all the Mischief they begun and continued in the Christian Church, and the bloody Persecutions they occasioned. In a very grave and formal Manner they put under the Bann of the Church, or, in other Words, sent to the Devil, all those who chose to express their Faith by the Word *Homoiousion*, rather than by *Homoousion*; that is, that the Son is of *like*, rather than of the *same* Substance with the Father. Thus the World was set on Fire, and the Church torn in Pieces about one *Greek* Word, or the placing of a single Letter; and this, by a learned, grave and pious Assembly of Divines.

But I fear your Friends will think that I am scarce grave enough; nor treat venerable Synods with due Decency.

ORTHODOXY STATED.

B. You make free enough with them; yet if they acted as you represent them, a little Severity is their due. I cannot but agree with you, that we must have Recourse to our Bibles as the first and last Standard of a Christian's Faith, and wish all Men who own it as such in *Words*, would do it in *Deeds*.

But to go on; you seem to make too little of a *sound Faith*, and scarce distinguish it from a *good Heart* and an upright Life.

C. I distinguish them as much as the sacred Author, whom I quote, doth. *David* thought, that *doing*

God's Commandments was the best Proof of a *good Understanding*, or of a *sound Faith*, so do I; and I challenge you, or any of your Friends, to produce a better Proof of a *sound Faith* than a *holy Life*, or any other Proof that is good for any thing without this. See *Dialogue*, p. 7.

Does it not appear utterly inconsistent with your Notion of *God*, as a wise, just and good Lawgiver and Governor, to require any more from his Subjects and Children, than *heartly Desires* and *sincere Indevours* to find out and obey the Truth? Do you not think that every Man thus qualified is *Orthodox* in *God's Account*; tho', at the same time, he may be very *Heterodox* to the Bigots amongst Men?

B. This is a Subject in which I own I am not very clear; tho' you do not actually confound *sound Knowledge* and a *holy Life*; or a *good Understanding* and *Uprightness of Heart*; yet you make them inseparable, and make a *good Life* to be the *best*, if not the *only* Proof of a *sound Faith*, or of a *good Understanding*.

This I take to be a Point of so great Consequence to the Peace of the Church, and so useful, if true, for reconciling all contending Parties of Christians, that I could wish to hear it more fully and clearly stated.

It seems to imply, that *one Opinion does not render a Man more acceptable to God than another*, while we sincerely seek the Truth, and act according to the Truths we believe.

And that there is no such a Thing as *proper Orthodoxy*, or thinking right as to religious disputable Doctrines; and that we ought to acknowledge and treat as Brethren and Fellow-Christians all who *live agreeably to the Gospel*, whatever their differing Sentiments may be.

Now these are Matters I am not well satisfied about; if your Principle be right, and my Inferences from it just, the Christian Church will be a strange Medley of *Arians*, *Socinians*, *Antinomians*, *Baptists*, *Quakers*, &c.

C. I own your Inferences to be perfectly right; that bare Opinions render no Man acceptable to God; that in his Eye there is no Orthodoxy but Sincerity; that we ought therefore to acknowledge all Men as Brethren, and to treat them as good Christians, who live well, or whose Conversation is agreeable to the Gospel: And I think our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, as well as his other Discourses, will justify, and do establish this Conclusion.

For what Principle can produce a good and holy Life, but *Faith*; Faith in all the grand and undoubted Doctrines of the Gospel? And if a Man have Faith enough to produce *good Works*, to qualify him for *Acceptance with God*, to save his Soul; he has sure enough to intitle him to Communion with Men.

You also judge right, that these Sentiments entertained and practised, would reconcile all contending Christians, at least so far as to induce them to *receive one another*, without insisting upon Agreement in Matters of *doubtful Disputation*, according to that famous reconciling Chapter, *Rom. xiv.*

B. Since there is a real Difference between *Truth* and *Error*, there must be a Difference between *thinking right* and *thinking wrong*; now thinking right in Points of Religion I call *Orthodoxy*.

C. I own there is such a Thing as *speculative Orthodoxy*, or thinking right about the Doctrines of the Gospel; and that Truth can lie but on one Side of a disputed Question; and that Truth, or thinking right, is a valuable Possession and Property.

But then, in every Article essential to Religion, or of great Importance to it, I am inclined to think that every good Man, or holy Liver, does *think, believe, and understand aright*, or that his main governing Notions are sound and just. For Instance, he believeth in one God, the Creator and Governor of the World, and in one Mediator between God and Man; in a future Life, and a coming Judgment; in the Gospel of Christ, as a Revelation from God; he endeavours to understand it, and forms his Temper

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and Life by it. And tho' he may mingle many *Errors* with Truth, and many *wrong Notions* with his right ones; yet *Truth* having a prevailing Force, over all his *Errors*, leads him to Righteousness and Holiness; on which Account, he ought to be esteemed, in the general, a *sound and orthodox Christian*.

Men ought, as we hope, *God will* make Allowances for the Prejudices and Errors which may arise from his Constitution, Education, &c. while he remains a *Lover and Seeker of Truth* *.

Certainly, how *happy* soever they are, who find the Truth, in Matters of Disputation; they may be as *honest* who find it not; for it is not an *accidental finding* it, but a sincere *Love* to it, which God accepts: So that a Christian may be very orthodox to God, who is very heterodox to some of *his Neighbours*; according to *John vii. 17. If any Man will do his Will, he shall know of the Doctrine, whether it be of God.* -----
Chap. viii. 43. Why do ye not understand my Speech, because you cannot (indure to) hear my Word. -----
Chap. ix. 31. If any Man be a Worshipper of God, and doth his Will, him he heareth.

On the other hand, as a considerable Author observeth, an ungodly, carnal, worldly Man (tho' he be a learned Preacher of Truth) is *damnable erroneous*, or heterodox to God †.

And as another of the first Rank says, that only is a *fundamental Error*, which is inconsistent with a good Heart and a religious Conversation ||.

And a later great Writer, to the same Purpose, says, ** It is no very hard Matter to judge of Truth, if we are but sincerely disposed to imbrace it; *If any Man will do God's Will, he will know of the Doctrine, whether it be of God.* A common Capacity, and an ordinary Share of Understanding will afford Light

* There are few Men living who are less troubled to see others differ in Opinion from them than I am; if any Man patiently suffer me to differ from him, it nothing affects me, how much or how little he differs from me. *Jos. Mede's Life*, p. 10.

† *Baxter's Ch. Hist.* p. 30.

|| *Occasional Papers*, Vol. II. No. 1.

** *Shuckford's Conn.* Vol. II. p. 484.

enough, if evil Passions do not make the *Light that is in us to become Darkness*; but if our Heart is not duly disposed to imbrace Truth, neither *may we be persuaded*, by the greatest Arguments and Demonstrations that can be offered for it, even tho' we have uncommon Abilities to judge of and understand the Force of what is represented to us.

B. I must confess I begin to be of your Mind, that a good and honest Heart, a sincere Love to the Truth, a Desire to know and do God's Will, is the only acceptable Orthodoxy. That therefore, not thinking exactly like one another, but mutual Charity, Forbearance, and Toleration, is the only God-like and Christian Method of Union amongst Christians.

C. There is certainly no other Method; except, 1. Being all of one Mind, which is impossible; or, 2. Professing to be so, while we are not, which is abominable; or, 3. Banishing and destroying all those who differ from us, which is diabolical *.

B. I am convinced of the Impossibility of the first Method, and of the Wickedness of the other two; and see no other left, but *bearing with one another* in our differing Sentiments. Here then we must fix, "That a real Desire, and hearty Indevour to know the Truth, as revealed by God, with a Conformity to it in Temper and Life, is all that God *does*, or that Man *ought* to require."

C. Very right; for does any wise and just Master require any more of his Servants, than *to do their best*, or what can reasonably be expected, in order to understand and execute his Will?

Moreover, God hath revealed Truth, and declared his Will so *plainly*, in all necessary Points, that I think no honest diligent Inquirer can mistake it; *He who runs may read, Hab. ii. 2. and a way-faring Man may find his Way, Isa. xxxv. 8.*

Was it not thus, what must become of Servants,

* See Dr. Hayley's Sermon before the King, Jan. 5. 1717.

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Mechanicks, Ploughmen, for whom Salvation is intended, as much as for those of upper Rank?

To say that God would not write those Things plainly, which he thought necessary for all Men to know, and which he wrote on purpose, that all Men might know; is to say, that he would and would not at the same time; or, that he wrote them on purpose that Men might know them, and yet that he wrote them so, that Men might not know them*.

B. Tho I cannot but yield to the Force of these Truths, yet one absurd Consequence of your Principles, which I urged, you have not yet removed; namely, that the Church of Christ will be a Medley of Errors and erroneous Members.

C. You know how easy, and how common it is to put *ill Names* on *good Men* and good Things. If a Man be a Lover of God, a Servant of Christ, a Seeker of Truth, he deserves a *good Name*, and it is an Act of Injustice to put upon him a *bad one*; and if misguided Zeal will call sincere and good Christians, *Arians*, *Socinians*, *Antinomians*, *Anabaptists*, *Quakers*, as God will not reject them on this Account, no more should we.

To finish therefore this Head. If he who studieth to *know*, and striveth to *do* his great Master's Will; if he who taketh the Scriptures as his Rule, and endeavoureth to understand his Rule, and also to practise according to it, if he is not *sound* and *orthodox*, as far as is necessary to his Acceptance with God; no *good Man* can be orthodox or sound in the Faith; For what can any good Man do more?

Yet to give you farther Satisfaction in this great Article, I'll refer you to a Passage in the Works of the famous JOHN MILTON †; and, if you shall not think it tedious, I will read it to you.

B. The Reputation of that Author is so established, and has grown so much of late, that I am apt to think

* Christian Magazine, p. 68.

† Tract of Religion, Heresy, &c. his Works, p. 308.

what he has wrote may deserve Attention, and I shall be obliged to you for your Pains.

C. This is the noble Passage.

" It is a human Frailty *to Err*, and no Man is Infallible here on Earth ;
 " but so long as all these [*Lutherans, Calvinists, Anabaptists, Socinians, Armi-*
 " *nians*] profess to set the Word of God before them, as a Rule of Faith and
 " Obedience, and use all Diligence and Sincerity of Heart, by Reading, by
 " Learning, by Study, by Prayer, for the Illumination of the Holy Spirit,
 " to understand the Rule and obey it, THEY HAVE DONE WHAT MAN
 " CAN DO : God will assuredly pardon them, as he did the Friends of *Job*,
 " good and pious Men, tho' much mistaken (as there it appears) in some
 " Points of Doctrine.

" But some will say, *With Christians it is otherwise, whom God hath pro-*
 " *mised by his Holy Spirit to teach all Things.* True, all Things absolutely
 " necessary to Salvation ; but the hottest Disputes amongst Protestants, calmly
 " and charitably inquired into, will appear less than such. The *Lutherans*
 " hold Consubstantiation ; an Error indeed, but not mortal. The *Calvinist* is
 " taxed with Predestination, and to make God the Author of Sin ; not with
 " any dishonourable Thoughts of God, but it may be over zealously assert-
 " ing his absolute Power, not without Plea from Scripture. The *Anabaptist*
 " is accused of denying Infants their Right to Baptism ; but they say, They
 " deny them nothing, but what the Scripture denies them. The *Arians* and
 " *Socinians* are charged to dispute against the Trinity ; yet they affirm to be-
 " lieve the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, according to the Scriptures, and
 " the Apostolick Creed. As for the Terms, Trinity, Triunity, Consub-
 " stantiality, Tripersonality, and the like, they reject them as scholastick
 " Notions, not to be found in Scripture, which, by a general *Protestant* Max-
 " im, is plain and perspicuous abundantly to explain its own Meaning, in the
 " properest Words belonging to so high a Matter, and so necessary to be
 " known ; a Mystery indeed to their Scholastic Subtilties, but in Scripture a
 " plain Doctrine.

" The *Arminian* easily is condemned for setting up Free-Will, against
 " Free-Grace ; but that Imputation he disclaims in all his Writings, and
 " grounds himself largely upon Scripture only.

" It cannot be denied, that the Authors, or the late Revivers of all these
 " Sects and Opinions, were learned and worthy, zealous and religious Men,
 " as appears by their Lives written, and the Fame of their many eminent
 " and learned Followers, perfect and powerful in the Scriptures, holy and
 " unblameable in their Lives. And it cannot be imagined, that God would
 " desert such zealous and painful Labourers in his Church, and oftentimes
 " Sufferers for their Conscience, to damnable Errors and a reprobate Sense ;
 " who had so often implored the Assistance of his holy Spirit : But rather
 " having made no Man infallible, that he has pardon'd their Errors, and
 " accepted their pious Endeavours ; sincerely searching all Things, according
 " to the Rule of Scripture, with such Guidance and Direction as they can
 " obtain of God by Prayer.

" What *Protestant* then, who himself maintains the same Principle, and
 " disavows all implicit Faith, would persecute, and not rather charitably
 " tolerate such Men as these ; unless he means to abjure the Principles of his
 " own Profession ?

" If it be ask'd, *How far they should be tolerated ?* I answer, Doubtless
 " equally, as being all *Protestants* ; that is, on all Occasions to be permitted
 " to give an Account of their Faith, either by arguing, preaching in their
 " several Assemblies, publick Writing, and the Freedom of Printing."

B. I thank you, Sir, for this shining Quotation. I am charm'd with the Wisdom, Moderation, Justice and Candour that appears thro' the whole. I know not how to dissent from so much Evidence; the Reasoning is so strong, the Sentiments so charitable, the Counsels so healing and friendly, that I must yield. I hope I shall hereafter treat my Fellow Christians with more Temper, how widely soever they differ from me. Did all Parties give in to such Thoughts and Maxims as these, fierce and angry Contentions amongst Christians and Protestants would cease; they would become *one lovely Body*, united and animated by the *Spirit* of Toleration, Forbearance, and Love.

Yet, I presume, our agreeing thus far in Principles and a Spirit of Candour towards one another, and towards all other Christians, need not hinder our proceeding to reconsider the Points in which you and I differ.

C. No, by no means; our agreeing not to fall out and abuse, or think ill one of another, on the score of our differing Sentiments, should be no Bar to amicable Conference, in order to gain more Knowledge of the Truth, or to rectify another's Mistakes, where we apprehend a Neighbour is in the wrong; for *Truth* is more desirable than *Error*, and more likely to advance Religion and Virtue.

Only let us guard against calling and treating each other as *Heathens*, *Apostates*, *Hereticks*, and *Deists* only because we differ in our Notions about some disputed Points in Religion; for *bad Names* are a differing Thing from *good Arguments*. Let us all fear the Presumption of climbing into God's Throne and pronouncing Sentences of *Damnation* against Men for no other Crime, but *believing* what they think they find in God's Word; or, for *not believing* what they profess they cannot find there.

B. As you can witness I *have* done; I hope I shall avoid all such unjust and unchristian Language, which betrays a *bad Spirit*, if not a *bad Cause*. Nay, I can free

freely give up the Terms *unsound* and *heterodox*, and no more apply them to Men, whom I take to be real Christians. Tho' some of our Friends give a different Interpretation of some of those Texts, where we meet with the Word *sound*, *sound in the Faith*, from what you do.

C. I apprehend, that most sober Writers agree with me in my Notion of *Soundness*; and that a *Heart sound in God's Statutes*, *Psal. lxxix. 80.* is the best Proof of a sound Head, a sound Faith, a good Understanding.

Wherein any of your Friends differ, or affect to differ from me as to the Sense of those Texts, I leave every studious Reader to judge which Sense is best; only let me add, that *sound*, in *2 Tim. i. 7.* may signify *prudent*. And to *Tit. ii. 8.* might be added, *wholesome, healthful* to Souls.

B. But, by the way, is it not an uncivil Suggestion, that the Assembly's Confession, and the Articles of the C----- of E----- are the Dictates of Men's Folly?

C. This has been reply'd to before, and may be further considered hereafter. Whenever, or wherever Men draw up Articles of Faith, subscribe them instead of the Words of the Holy Ghost, and oblige their Brethren to subscribe, or profess to believe them, under the Penalties of losing as much Reputation, Peace and brotherly Communion, as it is in their Power to deprive them of; tho' this is done by the most learned, grave and pious Assembly of Divines in the World, I shall not stick at pronouncing it *Folly*, and one of the *most mischievous Follies* that ever Men were guilty of.

Concerning JESUS CHRIST.

B. You might a little mollify your Expressions; --- but we'll let that pass, and enter upon some of the principal Particulars. And first, that of

Our SAVIOUR'S DIVINITY.

C. Church Tyranny, inventing and imposing new Articles of Faith, cannot well be treated with too

great Severity, it having been the Fountain of the worst Miseries to Mankind.

Nor can I approve of substituting the *Divinity of Christ*, his *true, real and proper Deity*, instead of his *absolutely supreme Deity*. It is only this Latter we argue against, as being the sole Prerogative of *God the Father*; the Former we allow, and plead for and defend in a Way we think more consistent than that of our Adversaries.

This Way of Dealing I caution'd you and others against, as a Species of *Lying*; being used with no other View, but to impose on the Vulgar, and to give an unfair Advantage to their Argument. Christ and his Cause do not need our Lies.

B. I am not for Trick and Jugling, of any Sort, but only for finding out the Truth, and maintaining it as well as I can; therefore my Arguments shall tend to prove the *supreme Deity* of Jesus Christ, and his *Equality* with the Father. And this is one of my chief Arguments; "That either the Father hath communicated *all* Divine Perfections to the Son, "or only *some*; if the Father hath only communicated *some* Divine Perfections to the Son, the Son "is God in a very low imperfect Manner, or Degree; "if the Father hath communicated *all* Divine Perfections to the Son, then the Son is God equal to "the Father." This Argument seems to me strong and conclusive.

C. I wonder you should be caught with such Sophistry, and a mere Shew of Argument.

The supreme self-existent God can have nothing *given* or *communicated* to him. To suppose then, as you do, that Christ has his Divine Nature, or his Divine Perfections *given, communicated* from the Father, (whether all or some Perfections only) is giving up the whole Cause, and granting that Jesus Christ is not the *supreme God*; for the supreme God can have NO Perfection communicated to him.

But let us take the Argument in Pieces; "If the "Father hath communicated to the Son only *some* "Divine

Divine Perfections, he must be imperfect." That is, He cannot be absolutely supreme, or equal to him who gave these Perfections; which is the Truth I affirm and prove.

"If the Father hath given him *all*, &c." That is, if he hath given him Self-existence, an underived Being, absolute Supremacy; that is, if he hath done what is a Self-contradiction, and impossible to be done.

B. But is not *All that the Father hath the Son's*, John xiv. 13. not by Gift, but by Necessity of Nature?

C. This Supposition is expressly contradictory to your own Argument, That Divine Perfections are given to the Son. It is also contrary to Christ's own Doctrine; *Matth. xxviii. 18. All Power in Heaven and Earth is GIVEN unto me; John v. 26. The Father hath GIVEN to the Son, to have Life in Himself.* Is not Giving an Act of Will and Pleasure; and is Will and Pleasure consistent with Necessity? Thus you contradict yourself and the Gospel, to support an imaginary Scheme.

B. Is not derived, dependent Omnipotence, and Omniscience a staring Contradiction*?

C. I see no Contradiction, in supposing the Infinite Almighty Father communicated to his eternal and only begotten Son, Power to create and build the World, and a Knowledge of all the Creatures he made. As this is the Scripture Account, so to deny the Possibility of it, is to limit the ALMIGHTY, whom none can find out unto Perfection.

B. If I allow Power, and other Perfections and Dominion to be given to Christ; yet may they not be in him necessarily as *Son of God*, as Light is in the Sun?

C. If you grant Power, Dominion and Headship over all in Heaven and Earth was given to Christ, then they were not his before given to him, and then he had them not by Necessity of Nature; Gift and

Necessity are contradictory Ideas. If the Son has *any thing* by *Necessity of Nature*, he would have *every thing* by the same *Necessity*, and nothing at all by *Gift*.

Light is as essential to the Sun, as a Capacity of Thinking is to a reasonable Spirit; but these Beings and their Powers exist not necessarily, but by the Pleasure of God, on whom they depend. The Idea of Light is necessarily connected with the Idea of the Sun, as the Idea of Power to think, with the Idea of Spirit; but this hypothetical *Necessity* is no way applicable to our present Purpose.

When the Father, in *Luke xv. 31.* says, *Son ---- all that I have is thine*, no Argument for the eldest Son's possessing that *All* by *Necessity of Nature*, or for his *Equality* with his Father, can be thence drawn; no more can such an Argument be drawn from Christ's saying, *All Things which the Father hath are mine: He was Heir of All.*

B. I argue farther, That if the Father only is Most High God, and Jesus Christ is a God subordinate and inferior to him, whom he has commanded all Men to worship, then there are two distinct Gods, both Objects of religious Worship, directly contrary to the first Commandment.

C. That is, then there exists the *only true God*, who, as Christ says, is the *Father*; there exists also Jesus Christ his Son, whom God hath sent, who has all Dominion given to him, and is therefore also called *God*, or *a God*, whom the Father hath commanded all Men to honour.

Now, if there be any false Doctrine here, any Absurdities, any Contradiction to the first Commandment, it falls not on *me* directly, but on *Christ* and his Gospel, from whence I borrow these Truths *.

This

* Note, That *Justin Martyr*, one of the most ancient Fathers of the Church, who lived in the next to the Apostolick Age, in his *Dialogue* proves, by several Arguments, that Jesus Christ is *truly God*; yet asserts, he is distinct from the Father, was begotten by a voluntary Generation, before all Creatures, ministered according to the Will and Counsel of the Father; and there-

This Gospel Doctrine may be taken in Consistency with the *first Command*, which speaks of ONE PERSON only, who is to be worshipped as *God Supreme*; not of *more Persons* than one.

Or, if you choose another Way of reconciling the Commands of the Old and New Testament; you may suppose, that God himself, in commanding Men to honour his Son, has repealed so much of the first Command, as is inconsistent with the New Testament Command, to honour or worship his Son. I may add, That in the Honour paid to Jesus Christ, God the Father is ultimately honour'd, as this is paid *to the Glory of God the Father*, *Phil. i. 11.* Chap. ii. 11.

B. Tho' I know not which of your Solutions to accept, or whether any of them, I argue farther, That Christ's being called JEHOVAH does fully prove him to be the Most High God.

C. No Argument can prove contradictory Propositions to be both true. If *Jesus Christ*, in his highest Capacity, or in his Divine Nature, be the SON of God, his only begotten Son; he is not that Most High God who begat his Son; but the Most High God, is the Father of his only begotten Son.

Yet when the Son personates *Jehovah*, he may be called *Jehovah*; as the Angel, no other perhaps than the Son of God, in *Gen. xviii. 13.* Chap. xix. 24. Does not also an Angel speak in the Person of God, in *Revel. xi. 1, 2, 3?* "And was it not usual, as Dr. Bennet observeth, for such as delivered Messages from others, to speak after the same manner those Persons would have done, in whose Name they came; and for those who return'd Answers by Messengers, to speak and behave, as if those very Persons were present, in whose Names the Messengers came?*"

fore had no Notion of his being *Supreme God*: And this is the Sense of all the *Anti-Nicene* Fathers who have wrote on that Subject, as well as of the great *Eusebius*.

Is not he who is called *Jehovah*, in *Jer. xxiii. 6.* expressly called an Angel, a Messenger, in *Mal. iii. 1.* *JEHOVAH, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his Temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant.* See *Isa. lxiii. 9?* Does not an Angel also expressly name himself *Jehovah*, and speak in the Person of *Jehovah*, in *Gen. xxii. 15, 16.* *The Angel of JEHOVAH called unto Abraham, out of Heaven ---- and said, By myself, saith JEHOVAH, have I sworn, ---- In blessing I will bless thee? ----* So that, if it should be proved, that Christ is called *Jehovah*, no Argument can thence be drawn for his *Supreme Deity*; since that Name is given to an Angel, when speaking in *Jehovah's* Name. See *Exod. xxii. 20, 21.*

B. Not to insist upon this any farther; What Ground is there to charge our Doctrine with Contradictions? Should I say, that the Father is one Supreme God, and the Son another Supreme, or Most High God, this, I own, would be a Contradiction. But -----

C. Why, Friend, will you adopt such Quibbles and Evasions, and use them as gravely as if they were solid Arguments? You say, the Father, who is one Person, is Most High God; and that the Son, who is another Person, is Most High God. Now, what is it but saying, there are two Persons, who are both Most High God? If two, then not one only; or if one only, yet not one only; if two, yet not two. What are these but Contradictions?

B. We only say, that Father, Son, and Spirit are, all together, the one Most High God; which being one Proposition, has no Contradiction in it.

C. This Proposition is, first, a Contradiction to *Reason*, or the Dictates of Nature, which is the Voice of God, and the Candle of the Lord; for this tells us, there is but one self-existent, intelligent Creator and Ruler of the Universe; or one Person who is Supreme God, and the Most High Governor. It is a Contradiction to the *whole Bible*, which every where, conformable to the Voice of Reason, speaketh

of God as one Person, one Agent; and of the Father, and of him only, as that Person, that Supreme Agent.

It is also a *Self-Contradiction*; for tho' you say, it is but one Proposition, it is a *complex* one, and hath three Propositions in it; namely, the Father is the Most High God, the Son is the Most High God, the Holy Spirit is the Most High God; and yet you say, all these three Persons are but one Most High God, which surely is one, and a flaming Contradiction; *Three*, who are all *the Highest*. Here are also *three* Most High, making *but one* Most High; which surely is another Contradiction. Nay, here are really (to escape out of Quibbles, Shifts, and Darknes) *three Persons* making *but one Person*; which, I hope, you will allow is another Contradiction. For you acknowledge, that the Father is a Person, the Son a Person, the Holy Ghost a Person; these three Persons, you say, make but one Most High God. Now, surely the Most High God is but *one Person*, that is, *one intelligent Agent*; so that here are *three* intelligent Agents, making not three, but one intelligent Agent; unless you will affirm, that there are three individual intelligent Rulers of the Universe, equally underived, independent, equally supreme. And if you allow this, are you not a Tritheist indeed? And do not you set up three (and by the same Rule might set up three both times three) Co-ordinate Most High Gods?

Before I leave this Point, let me recommend to your Consideration an Argument drawn up by a learned Writer *, in the following Form.

He who is Alone the Supreme Governor of the Universe, is Alone the Supreme God.

But the Father is Alone the Supreme Governor of the Universe.

This latter Proposition proved.

He who never acts in Subjection to the Will of any other Person, and every other Person whatsoever always acts in Subjection to his Will, is Alone the Supreme Governor of the Universe.

* Reply to *Waterland's Defence*, by a Clergyman in the Country, Pref.

But, the Father never acts in Subjection to the Will of another Person; and every other Person whatsoever always acts in Subjection to his Will.

Therefore the Father Alone is the Supreme Governor of the Universe.

B. This is a Way of arguing I am not used to and must leave abler Heads to answer an Argument which I own a little puzzles me.

Nor need we go any farther, if our Doctrine is laden with the Contradictions with which you charge it; for no absurd and contradictory Doctrine can come from God, or be a Doctrine of Christ.

Yet I'll go on to a few Particulars. You argue against the Supreme Deity of the Son of God, from his being *sent*, and his being the *Angel* of the Covenant, even before his Incarnation. But may not two Persons, equal in Nature and Power, agree either of them to lay aside their equal Authority, and submit to be sent by the other?

C. This is rare Divinity indeed! Does not *being sent* imply Inferiority on the one Hand; and does not *sending* imply superior Authority on the other Hand? Now, is it not absurd and blasphemous, in a very high Degree (tho' I know your Intentions are not so) to suppose, that the unoriginated, underived, independent, supreme Governor of the Universe can at any Instant, on any Occasion, by any Agreement become *inferior* to another, be his *Angel*, a *Messenger*, a *Servant* to be *sent* on Errands? Is not this a Supposition, that would make every sensible Man, and every sincere Christian tremble? Can that be the Doctrine of the Gospel, which needs such an absurd contradictory and blasphemous Proposition to support it?

Two co-ordinate Persons, each Most High God, two equal Rulers of the Universe, who, by Consent may give up the Supremacy and Government to each other; Does not this lay a Foundation for a false Scheme of Religion? Is not this a Doctrine which, one Dash, overturns the Monarchy of the Universe?

— — — — — *unwedding* GOD THE FATHER.

B. I must confess it giveth me some Horror, to conceive, that the eternal, underived, self-existent, independent JEHOVAH, should be *sent* by another, as his *Angel*.

Yet as *Phil. ii. 6.* seems to favour the Notion of *Equality*, I should be glad to know what Men of Note depart from our Translation.

C. It is sufficient to a thinking Man, that the Context itself, and our natural Idea of God, as one un-originated Ruler of the Universe, are inconsistent with our *English* Translation of that Verse.

Yet, to clear myself from Singularity, and to inspire your confident Friends with a little Modesty, I could name such great Men as Bishop Bull, Archbishop Tillotson, Grotius, Dr. Whitby, Dr. Bennet, Dr. Clarke, Dr. Jackson, Mr. Pierce, &c. as giving up our *English* Translation. More learned Names will not easily be found, and many of them were on the Orthodox Side in the Doctrine of the Trinity. They prove, that the *Greek* Phrase, wherever found, imports, *did not affect, greedily catch at, or assume Divinity*, or to appear *like a God*. Pray consult, and try to answer the learned *Pierce* on the Place, before you urge this Text any more; a Text which, with the Context, as fully as can be done, overthrows the inconsistent Doctrine of an *Equality*.

B. May not what you assign as a Reason, why our Translation is wrong, be turned upon you as a Reason, why it must be right; namely, Christ's being the *Image* of God?

C. Fine Reasoning indeed! Christ's being the *Image* of God, proveth he was that God, and also equal to that God, whose Image he was; that is, that he was not that God, but only his express Image.

Thus, with equal Strength, that is, with equal Weakness and Absurdity, you may argue, that his being *obedient* to God, (even to Death) proveth he was that God, to whom he was obedient; and that his being *exalted* of God, (to the Glory he had with God, before the World was, *John xvii. 5.* and to

other new Glories, *Phil.* ii. 9. 1 *Pet.* iii. 22.) proveth he was that very God, or equal to that very God who exalted him. Can you swallow such Absurdities?

B. Not very easily, they begin to stick a little; yet it is usually answered. That being *in the Form of God* meaneth his *essential Form*, or that he was really God as being in the *Form of a Servant*, meaneth, that he was a Servant.

C. Do you understand what your Friends and Writers mean by *essential Form*?

B. No; I wish to see it explain'd, that I might understand it.

C. Explication would often spoil your Argument and Cause; Writers on your Side find it safer to talk without Ideas, and to darken Things with Words void of Sense and Wisdom. But, in whatever Sense they take it, (as I apprehend they take it in *no Sense* at all) I suppose they cannot shew that *Form* (*μορφη*) ever signifieth any thing but *Likeness*, or Appearance, never *Essence*. So that the Argument may be turn'd against you thus; As Christ put on the Form, Likeness, or Appearance of a Servant, entred into the Condition and did the Work of a Servant, yet was not a proper Servant, being never in Subjection to the Will and Power of any Man; so, before he appeared as a Servant, he was in the Form or Likeness of God; but was not that God, in whose Likeness he had been, of whom he had formerly personated.

[REASONINGS *against* REASON.]

B. However, what is urged in the Dialogue, that our Sense of the Text is a Contradiction to Reason, deserveth less Regard, as Reason, in our present State of Imperfection and Corruption, is very insufficient to guide us in Matters of Religion.

C. And can you, Friend, at this rate, sacrifice a good Understanding of your own to the Reveries and Enthusiastick Strains of your deluded Friends! It is I own, *prudent* enough in your Writers, to appear against *Reason*, as long as *Reason* is against them.

Thus

Thus, in ancient Times, there were some, as *Clemens Alexandrinus* reports, who dreaded Philosophy as much as Children do Hobgoblins *.

Tho' your Party are frightened at the very Sound of Reason, and, upon all Occasions, freely declare against it, yet, even in writing upon religious Doctrines, they use that Measure of Reason they have; and would use more, were they blessed with it.

You know very well, we never defend Reason in Opposition to *Revelation*; we always own its Insufficiency --- but we justify the Use of Reason, in distinguishing a Revelation of God from the Doctrines of Men, and in finding out the true Sense of that Revelation.

Let me ask then, Can there be any thing in Religion, or in a Revelation from God, but what is rational? Can God publish irrational Doctrines, or require unreasonable Duties? Can Religion, in either Principle or Practice, in Habit or Act, subsist without Reason? Is not the whole Bible, from first to last, an Address to the Reason and Understandings of Men, however depraved and corrupted? Is not our Understanding or Reason, however corrupted, our highest and best Faculty? And are there any Affairs in which we ought more honestly and more seriously to use our Reason than in Affairs which relate to our spiritual and eternal Welfare? Does not Reason direct us to prepare for Eternity, to believe the Gospel, but to reject the Doctrines and Traditions of Men, which have no Support in the Word of God?

Was *Adam's* Reason and Understanding diminish'd by Sin? Have the *Angels* lost their Reason by Apostacy from God? Is not the *Serpent* more subtile than any Beast of the Field? Are not many wicked Men wise to do Evil?

Yet it must be confess'd, that there are Men in the World, who give effectual Proof that their Understandings are darkned, and their Reason corrupted, by

* Lord Chancellor King's Inquiry, p. 92.

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the Weakness of their Arguments, and the Strength of their Zeal; by their contradictory Reasonings, and abusing all who pretend to see those Contradictions; by requiring unchristian Terms of Communion, and calling their Brethren and Fellow-Christians *Apostates* and *Infidels*, who will not comply with them.

Yet they do not professedly give up their Understandings, and, in express Words, tell all their Hearers and Readers, *they have done with Reasoning*, and are resolved to go on in endless *Ravings*, about religious Matters.

Should we all agree to give up our *Reason*, what Faculty must we use instead thereof, in searching our Bibles, and in the Conduct of a religious Life? Can we make any Use at all of the Holy Scriptures, as a Rule of Religion, but by the Use of our *Reason*? Can we prove the Scriptures to be from God, find out the Meaning of them, or pay a wise and acceptable Obedience to them, without the Exercise of *Reason*?

B. I cannot but think our Friends in the wrong, to declaim against *Reason*; for if we must be Men of Understanding and Reason in any Thing, it should be in Religion. The very writing the Holy Scriptures for our Use, supposeth we have Reason to make use of them; and, if honestly used, they are a Principal, if not the only Help to set us right in our Judgment about all religious Questions*.

Yet may I not insist upon it, that it is no Contradiction to Reason, to suppose the *Son*, tho' begotten by the Father, may be equal to him; as you must own it possible, and often Fact in the Case of a human Father and Son? May he not also be begotten, and yet not derived?

C. I admire you do not see the Absurdities and Self-contradictions in these Suppositions.

Because God is able to *make* two Men equal in Nature and Office, being both *his Work*, and all their

* See Ibbot's Sermon at Boyle's Lectures. See Dialogue, Part I. p. 25, 26.

Authority *his Gift*; because he can indue a Son with Abilities equal, or, if he please, superior to those of his Father; or, because a Father can part with the whole, or a Share of his *derived* Authority to his Son. ----- Therefore is it possible for the begotten Son of God, whose Person, Life, and Powers are from the Father, to be equal to HIM, who does not, nor possibly can *derive* any thing from any?

Does *Fulness* dwell in the Father by *Gift*, or thro' the Pleasure of another? can the Father (without Absurdity and Blasphemy) be called the *Image* of the Son?

You allow the Son to be *begotten* by the Father, yet in the same Breath expressly deny it, by supposing he doth not *derive* his Being, Life, and Glory from the Father. *Begotten yet not derived*, is as much a Contradiction as begotten and not begotten. If the Father alone is *of none* *, that is, derived from none, the Son must be *of another*, viz. the Father, that is, derived from him.

I might also insist again upon it, that, by your Suppositions, you advance the irreligious and contradictory Notion of two Co-ordinate Supreme Rulers of the Universe.

B. Truly I feared there was some Flaw in the Instance and Argument I used; tho' I was not able to find out and unvail the Sophistry of it. But you seem to make it plain, "That Man having his Nature from God, and his Power and Offices from God, (or from Men) may be equal in Nature, and equal in Powers, one to another; as God, who makes those Natures; or as God, or Man, who confer those Powers, shall see fit. Thus a Father and a Son, being both God's Creatures, both derived Beings, may, by God, be made equal."

But GOD, being from none, whatever belongeth to him, must belong to him necessarily, and can neither be increased nor diminish'd; he is absolutely

* Assemb. Confess. of Faith, Chap. ii.

Supreme. If he beget a Son, his Son must necessarily be subordinate to God his Father, and cannot possibly be, by Necessity of Nature, or in an absolute Sense, the Supreme God.

Tho' this, at present, seems pretty clear to me, yet it may be urged, "That when inferior Powers and a derived Nature are attributed to the Son of God, it is as he is *Man* and *Mediator*; not in his whole Capacity; in like manner are those Texts to be taken which speak of his being *sent*, &c." This is our Writers great Refuge, and I shall be glad to hear what you have to say to it.

C. As you see the Fallacy of your last Similitude, and the Weakness of the Argument drawn from it *, I hope to convince you, that this other Answer is a fallacious and false Evasion, the Refuge of Men baffled by the Force of Truth.

There is a Fallacy, and a very mean one too, in joining *Man* and *Mediator* together, as the Writers on your Side generally do. Judge you, Friend, whether this proceeds from Ignorance, or from a Design to confound the Readers Ideas, as if the Idea of *Man* and of *Mediator* was the same; whereas the Idea of *Mediator* comprehends the whole Person of Jesus Christ, as *God-Man*, together with his Office of mediating between God and Man; whereas *Man* is but a Part of the Idea of his whole Person. So that if those numerous Texts which assert a Derivation and Mission from God the Father, and a Subordination to him, are to be understood of Christ as *Mediator*; and if, as *Mediator*, he is *God-Man*, then they are to be understood of Christ in his highest Capacity, as God; and, upon your Principles, as Most High God, as God equal with the Father; that is, Christ, as Most High God, was begotten by the Father, was sent by him, was subordinate and inferior to him. Is not this as plain a Contradiction, as to say, he is not the Most

* See Remarks on Dr. Waterland's second Defence, by Philalethes Cantabrig.

High God? And is it not a blasphemous Speech to say, the Most High God can be *sent*?

It is another Contradiction (as your Scheme is full of them) to suppose, that Christ was *begotten, sent, came forth* from the Father, *as Man*, before he was Man; whereas he was *sent* in order to become Man, or to manifest himself in the Flesh.

Observe farther, that all these Assertions of your Writers are mere confident *Presumptions*, not only *without Proof*, but against Reason, against the Nature and Design of Language, against Scripture Evidence. And this way of Solution not only fixeth Contradictions upon the Son of God, but unfair *Equivocations*.

For, had our Lord Jesus been Supreme God, and known himself to be so, could he say it with Truth and Sincerity, could he say it without imposing on his Hearers, "That he *came from God*, had his Life " by *Gift* from God, even the Life he had *in himself*; " that he *could do nothing of himself*; that he *knew* " not the Day of Judgment; that the Father was " *greater than he, &c.*" if all this while he meant only of a *Part* of HIMSELF, and not of his whole self; or, if he mean'd it of himself in a very low Capacity, and not in his Highest?

Could he say these, and many such Things *absolutely*, without any Restriction or Explication, when his secret Meaning was of a different and contrary Import? Could he intend only a *Part of Himself*, when, in plain natural Construction the Words take in his *whole self*?

Upon the same Principles which will justify these Methods, might we not also justify all the Equivocations of the *Jesuits*? May not a Father Confessor very honestly deny he had a Secret revealed to him in Confession, (for Instance, the *Powder-Plot*) when his secret Meaning is, that it was revealed to him, and he knew it, not as *Man*, but as *Priest*? Shall we charge any such deceitful Language on the Son of God! If our Lord, in any Nature or Capacity,

knew the Day of Judgment, could he absolutely say he *knew it not*? No, not *as Son of God*, but that the *Father* only knew it, *Mat. xxiv. 36. Mark xiii. 32*. If the *Father* only knew it, the Son, in every Capacity, is excluded.

May I not add; What Occasion was there for Christ to tell his Hearers and the World, that the *Father* was *greater than he*, AS MAN; or, that the Son, *as Man*, was derived from and sent by God? Could any Man in his Senses possibly believe otherwise? What need was there to preach to the *Jews* that, *as Man*, he knew not the Day of Judgment? Did any of them doubt of this? Was any ever tempted to believe the contrary?

Again, when our Lord says, Of that Day knoweth no Man, nor the *Son*, but the *Father*; I am persuaded even your Writers are not so far gone in Enthusiasm and Contradiction, as to affirm, that by the *Father* is meant Father, Son, and Spirit.

When he prayeth to be *glorified with the Glory he had with the Father, before the World was*, *John xvii. 5*. does he speak of himself *as Man*, or as Mediator? By the Glory he had *with the Father*, does he mean the Glory he had with *himself*?

To conclude; Could our Blessed Lord, in stronger and plainer Terms, deny he was the Supreme God, than by the foregoing Passages, and many others, wherein the whole of his Undertaking is ascribed to the *Will* of the Father, and referred to the *Glory* of the Father?

B. There seems to be some Truth and Weight in what you say; yet all our Writers hold, that the *Essence* of the Son is not begotten; and that where Christ is spoke of as the *Image* of the Father, it is to be understood of his *essential Image*.

C. You still amuse yourself, or are amused, and very much abused by your Writers, with the Sounds *Essence* and *essential*, without any Ideas annexed to these Sounds, or any Explications of them.

The Most High God cannot, in any Sense, be the

Image of another; if therefore the Son, in his highest Capacity, be the *express Image* of the Father, he is not the Most High God, but is begotten after the Image or Likeness of the Most High God.

Again, how plain and palpable is the Contradiction, that the *Son* is begotten, and yet his *Essence* is not begotten? Pray ask your worthy Authors, how they distinguish the *Essence* of a Person from the Person himself; ask them what there is in the Son but his *Essence*, or what is essential to him? And whether his *Person* be not his whole Being? Ask them if they allow the *Son*, as a Divine Person, was begotten, even his whole Person; what there is beside belonging to the Son, or essential to him, that is unbegotten? Can a Man be created, and yet his *Essence* be uncreated?

B. Tho' I cannot at present answer for our Authors, yet I can tell you, that they sum up their Sense of the Matter in these short Propositions; "The Father, as a Divine Person, begets; The Son, as a Divine Person, is begotten in the Divine Nature and *Essence*."

C. That is, the Sum of the Case is a dark mysterious Set of Words, which neither you, your Authors, nor any Body else do, or can understand.

B. I must confess this Way of Talking is all Darkness to me; and I wish our Preachers and Writers would learn to talk and write in Language which they could inable us their Hearers and Readers to understand.

But have you any thing farther to clear up that Text, *I and my Father are one*, *John* x. 30. Is not the plain Meaning, that the Father and Son, tho' two distinct Persons, are of one and the same Nature, and that their Power and Action are the same?

C. You go on to shelter yourself under the ambiguous Words, *same Nature*.- If by *same Nature* you mean, the same individual, underived, self-existent, intelligent Agent; is not this to contradict yourself,

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and to say they are the same *Person*? For, what is a Person, but an individual, intelligent Agent?

If by *same Nature* you mean of the same Kind, as *Peter, James, and John* are of the same (Kind of) Nature, is not this to assert two (or three) co-ordinate Governors of the World, two (or three) supreme Gods; If you will allow the Contradiction of more Supremes than one?

If by *same Nature* you mean a Person begotten by, or derived from the Father, in his perfect Likeness, partaking, in the fullest Manner, of all the communicable Perfections of the Father, this is Scripture Divinity; this is all I contend for.

But here, as else where, instead of answering, you evade the Argument, and urge not one Word to solve the Paradox in *John xvii. 21.* where Believers are said to be *one with Christ*, As He is one with the Father *.

As to *Sameness of Power, Action, or Operation*, I agree with you; in regard, as I had expressed it, the Son acted by a Power and Commission derived from the Father; which surely carrieth in it Unity of Will, Design, and End.

That the Context, as well as the Nature of the Case, and parallel Texts, leadeth to my Explication, will appear to any who attend to those Places, where Christ says, *His Power to lay down his Life, and to take it again, he receiveth from the Father*, Verse 18. *The Works I do in my Father's Name*; by his Order, by Power derived from him, to his Glory, Verse 25. *My Father, who gave me (my Sheep) is greater than all*, Verse 29. *Many good Works have I shewed you from my Father*, Verse 32.

That the *Jews belied Christ*, when they accused him of making himself *God*, appears as plainly as it well can appear, from our Lord's Answer, Verse 34----37 which imports, that if he had called himself *God*, or a *God*, he had been justified by their Law, which

* See *Taylor's ingenious Defence against Sloss*, p. 10, &c.

calleth Kings and Magistrates Gods; but that he had never assumed a higher Title than *Son of God*; which he might justly assume, being *sanctified by the Father*, and *sent* into the World to do the Works of the Father.

So that this Text and Context do most clearly and fully establish the Subordination of the Son to the Father, and intirely overthrows the absurd, contradictory, and unscriptural Notion of the Son's Equality.

B. However, you can't say, that God the Father is dishonour'd and affronted, by asserting the Son's Equality to him; since nothing, by our Doctrine, is taken from the Father, and given to the Son.

C. How, nothing! Do you make nothing of Self-existence, absolute Supremacy, Independency? Will God allow his Creatures to give these his chief Glories to another; or take it as no Affront, if they do it without and against his Order, and directly contrary to the Example of the Son of God, who did all his Works to the Glory of his Father?

I stand to it, that the whole Charge of robbing God the Father of his peerless Majesty, and super-eminent Perfections (shall I say, of *ungodding* God the Father) by setting up another equal to him, stands good against your Principles, and is far from being removed.

However, your Silence as to the Contradiction of a *begotten* and an *unbegotten* Essence, being the same individual Essence, I commend. See Dial. p. 13 *.

Laughing at MYSTERIES.

B. No more on this Point at present. But let me tell you, you are highly blamed for laughing at and bantering *Mysteries* in Religion.

C. Who can forbear laughing at the Folly of those Preachers and Writers, who veil all their Absurdities with the venerable Name of *Mysteries*. And when they would impose their unintelligible Jargon on

* See also the *Examination* of the sixth Answer in the Assemblies Catechism, and the *Defence* of it.

Souls, as *Gospel Truth*, is not Indignation due against such Conduct?

I doubt not your gravest Authors will bear me Company in laughing at the Mystery of *Transubstantiation*, and other Church Fopperies; tho' the Priests of *Rome* will call this *Profaneness*, and *laughing at Religion*. It has been long observed, that the Orthodox of all Men cannot bear to be laugh'd at. Yet, after all, some of your Writers, even when they pretend to differ, and will needs quarrel; yet agree with me, "That what is revealed is no longer a Mystery, tho' it was so before." But then this Truth they support with the Instance of a very gross Error; namely, "It is revealed, that the three Persons, Father, Son, and Spirit, are one God." This I must own is still a *Mystery* to me, tho' they say it is *none*, being revealed; yet they have never named, nor can name one Text in all God's Word, where it is revealed.

Nor can it ever be revealed, except by such Divines as your Authors; for God is certainly *one Person*, that is, one self-existent, intelligent, active, supreme Governor of the Universe, and not *three* of these.

That God, the one living and true God, consists of three Persons, is such a Contradiction as can never be revealed by God; it is contrary to the whole Stream of the Gospel, which, agreeably to the Dictates of Reason, speaks of *one Person*, even of God the Father, as the Most High God. It is therefore not only a *Mystery* above Reason, but an *Absurdity* contrary to it, that *one God* should consist of *three Persons*. And I cannot think it any Credit to Christianity, any Service to the Gospel, to load it with Absurdities.

When Divines, under the Cover of Zeal for the Divinity of Christ, act this Part; and thereby undermine the Gospel, and put a Bar in the Way of its Acceptance in the World, and expose it to the Scorn of Infidels, it is a good Office to endeavour to undeceive

those

those who have been misled, and to prevent honest Minds from being imposed upon by fair, but delusive pretensions.

Thus far then the *Dialogue* stands not only unshaken, but upon firmer Ground than before. What have you to offer next?

The Treatment of the BAPTISTS in the DIALOGUE Vindicated.

B. Since I do not find that my Friends object to what you said about *private Judgment*, or the Right of every Man to think for himself, I shall not do it: but only observe that in Case I shou'd, in these or any other Points, be mistaken, you have no Right, upon your own Principles, to treat me ill on that Account.

C. I agree with you intirely; and hope I shall never treat you or any Man ill, for imbracing what, after diligent Examination, he believes is Truth; or for speaking and acting according to his Judgment.

B. But in our former Conversation you treated our people, their Ministers and Opinions with a deal of severity and Satyr; Is this consistent with your Principle of the Right of private Judgment?

C. On the Score of their undue and *over high Claims* to the Spirit of God, their Theatrical Gestures, their monopolizing God's Grace to themselves; I spoke of them as *Whimsical*; with great Justice, I think; if not with Softness.

Their *unqualified Preachers* I remitted to such grades as they understood better; and what wiser advice could I give them?

Their *Errors*, which to me appear dishonourable to God, absurd in their Nature, destructive of Human Liberty, and pernicious to Religion and Virtue, treated as such, with a rational Warmth.

Their *Uncharitableness*, in Unchristianizing, and sentencing to Damnation their Brethren, who could not imbrace their Errors, I represented as very deplorable.

All this, I hope, is in as perfect Consistency with my allowing the Right of *private Judgment*; as dissuading a Man from drinking Poyson, is consistent with my allowing Men a Right to choose their own Liquor. It was also as consistent with *Charity* to your People, as reproving a Brother and not transferring Sin upon him, is consistent with Love to him. Nay, was not all this *my Duty*, while I see and judge of Things as I do?

If a few Passages in the *Dialogue* seem too strong and keen to some Readers; you ought to consider what Treatment the supposed Author has met with from Men of your Principles, by Letters wrote him, and about him, in Language most amazing; innumerable Stories raised against him, by odious Names fixed upon him; by hot Sermons pointed at him; by Attempts upon his Character and Usefulness; and all this *without any other Provocation*, but teaching Men with Calmness, Plainness and Patience, what he believed was the Truth of the Gospel. This was enough, a little to sharpen his Pen; yet, I profess, I see nothing but pleasant and good Temper, mixed with a just Warmth against Opinion derogatory from the Honour of Christianity, and prejudicial to Souls, through the whole Dialogue.

B. I must confess the Gentleman you speak of has been abused in a very high Degree, and more defamed than any Man in these Parts, since the Days of old *Baxter*. But as you judge us, so we do you to be in dangerous Errors, which we ought to oppose with all our Might.

C. Oppose them with all the Force of Argument you are Master of; but let us forbear hard Names and rash damnatory *Sentences*.

B. I have always (as you know) endeavoured to avoid that Wrath, Clamour, and Bitterness, which some of our Friends are too guilty of, and intend to guard against every Indecency hereafter.

The CHURCH-MAN'S *Change of* SENTIMENTS
accounted for.

Having now gone through this great Article of the *Trinity*, or the *Divinity of our Saviour*, I hope you will not take it as an Affront, if I ask you, Sir, how you came to go off from the Principles of your Education, and the Faith of the Church of *England*, on this important Article, which you once professed to believe?

C. Your Freedom with me is, I assure you, very acceptable, and what ought to take Place amongst Christians and Friends; in return to which, I do frankly own, that my Case was the same with that, I suppose, of many others; for many Years after I grew up, I *understood* little or nothing about this doctrine, and therefore could *believe* little or nothing about it, as far as it was a Subject of Controversy; but I adhered to certain *Forms of Speech* relating to it, which my Fathers had taught me, and which I found in our Creeds, Catechisms, Articles, and Doxologies; never questioning, but what so many learned and pious Men approved, and which had been taught in the Church for so many Ages, must certainly be right.

And when I first read Dr. *Clarke's* Book on the *Trinity*, a Book composed wholly of Texts of Scripture, ranged in proper Order; Propositions built upon them, and supported with the Testimony of Antiquity, I was rather *confounded* than *convinced*; I even trembled over so much Evidence brought against the received Doctrine ---- I almost feared searching farther into so awful a Theme; but as the Scriptures were given us to be understood, and it is every Man's Duty to search after Sacred Truth; I procured the learned *Waterland's* Pieces, and read them with some satisfaction. Between these two Authors, and others on both Sides, I was, for a while, like the Man in *Cicero* *, who, while reading *Plato*, believed the Soul's Immortality; but having laid down *Plato*,

* *Tuscul. Q. L. I. § 11. per Bentley, p. 20.*

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began again to doubt. Thus, while reading *Waterland*, I thought he well maintained the old Opinion and I was ready to wish he might stand his Ground and come off with Victory.----- But when I took *Clarke*, I began again to doubt, finding his Scheme wholly Scriptural.----- During my fluctuating State, sent for Dr. *Waterland's* Sermons; and finding, by his *Preface*, that when he came to the true Pinch of the Question, and stated the Point in a just Light he was reduced to a notorious and palpable Contradiction, asserting the Subsisting of *three* individual intelligent Agents, in *one* individual intelligent Agent and going on to maintain this absurd and contradictory Principle, as the very Basis of his Scheme, bid the learned Doctor and his Scheme *Good Night* and have since taken to the plain Word of God, instead of the metaphysical Subtilties, and deceitful Arguments of that artful Writer.

And the more I read and think, the more am I confirmed in my present Faith concerning the *Trinity* as I find it supported by the whole Gospel, consonant to the Dictates of Reason, and influential upon my religious Practice; and tho' it is not free from Difficulties yet no Objections of any moment occur, but what I think, are capable of a just and satisfactory Answer. Whereas there are only a few mistranslated or misunderstood Texts on the other Side; and which, I am very sure, must be misapply'd; since the Doctrine they are brought to support comprehends in it the many Absurdities and Contradictions which I have exposed thro' the whole Dispute.

B. I thank you, Sir, for opening yourself to me in so friendly a Manner. I must confess Horror and Trembling were ready to seize me, when I first began to entertain any Doubts about our Saviour's Supreme Deity; but I am now able to think over the Subject with more Composure, and freely own, with the ingenious Dr. *Watts* *, that the Orthodox Scheme cannot be defended.

* Dr. *Watts's* Dissertation concerning the Trinity, Part II. Pref.

But my giving up this one Point does not oblige me to relinquish any other of our great Principles, with which this has no immediate Connection, and particularly the Doctrine of *Election*, which is so often asserted in the Gospel.

ELECTION and REPROBATION.

C. That Doctrine presupposeth and includeth in it, if I mistake not, the Particulars following.

1. That Men are equally fallen and ruin'd thro' the Disobedience of another, even of the *first Man*.

2. That Men, even fallen Men, are equally related to God as his Offspring and Children, *Acts* xvii. 26, 27, 28. That they are all the Work of his Hands, and the Sheep of his Pasture, *Psal.* c. 3. That God is the Father of the Spirits of all Flesh, *Num.* xvi. 22. Chap. xxvii. 16.

3. That God, who foresaw Mens Ruin, saw no Difference in the Human Race, considered as fallen; but beheld them equally miserable; and, if guilty, equally guilty as the Children of fallen *Adam*.

4. That without any Reason at all on the Part of his Creatures and Children, without any Regard at all to their good or bad Behaviour, God decreed, by his mighty Power, or irresistible Grace, to bring to endless Happiness a very few of his lost Children, and to leave far the greater Number to perish for ever, without any sufficient Help, or a fair Trial.

5. That when God sent his Son into the World, to preach to, die for, and redeem Sinners; He, without more Pains or sufferings, could have redeemed, or have made himself a Ransom for all lost Sinners; yet, without any Reason on the Part of his fallen Children, God, by an arbitrary Decree, limited the Grace of Redemption to a few only of the lost Race.

6. That tho' the Gospel of Salvation was ordered to be preached, and is preached undistinguishingly

to Men, as if all who heard it were capable of Salvation by and through it; yet God, who sent his Son to preach this Gospel, and Christ who sent his Apostles on the same Errand, know that the greater Part of Mankind, to whom this Gospel is preached, are utterly incapable of Salvation; being left out of the merciful Decree, being never redeemed by Christ, and having no sufficient Grace intended them. That therefore this Gospel, by requiring Men to believe in Christ, as dying for them, or as their Saviour, requires an erroneous Belief; and by requiring this Faith, Conversion to God, and a holy Life, without Grace or Help sufficient, requires impossible Terms of Salvation.

7. That the Non-elect shall suffer a heavy, an eternal Vengeance, an aggravated Condemnation, for disbelieving and disobeying a Gospel which (according to some of your very Christian Writers) never offered Salvation to them; or, however, never offered Salvation to them in earnest, and which they never had Power to believe and obey*.

This is Part of that unrighteous, I may say, monstrous Scheme of Divinity, which I oppose, and which deserveth to be opposed with more Force than I am master of.

This is that Scheme which an ingenious Writer calleth, "the vilest Corruption of Christianity and practical Religion." And as another Writer terms it, "that Doctrine of *Fatality* and *unconditional Predestination*, which was so much the Shibboleth of the Orthodox less than an Age ago, and which is now the Scorn and Derision of Mankind †."

* And for all the Noise that some make about *Calvinism* (who perhaps never thoroughly understood it) I must declare it as my Opinion, that if some of the Doctrines *Calvin* published were set in a true Light to publick View, they would be more like to frighten some well-meaning Christians out of their Wits, than to make them wile unto Salvation. Dr. Clegg's Letter.

† Impart. Catech. p. 101,

This

This is the Scheme which makes *one Man to sin*; and God, on that Account, angry with and resolved to punish forever a great Part of the Congregation of Mankind, to allude to *Num. xvi. 22*. Infants, as well as others; tho' the Decree to do this is what *Calvin* himself calls a *horrible Decree*; and yet fathers it on the good and blessed God *.

This is the Scheme which representeth God as appointing Men to Wrath and Damnation, not only for what they cannot help, being fallen in *Adam*; and for not obeying the Gospel, which yet are both decreed by God †; but in Contradiction to God's own Word, which expressly declareth, that *God hath not appointed Men to Wrath*, but to obtain Salvation by *Jesus Christ*, who died for them, *1 Thess. v. 8, 9*.

This is the Scheme which makes God to *decree* and *will* Sin, and yet to forbid and hate it, ----- to decree the Fall of *Adam*, as involving all his Posterity in it, and to punish (for ever in Hell) the greater Part of his Posterity, for being unhappily born.

This is the Scheme which represents GOD, the good and gracious God, as the great Tyrant over the Universe, arbitrarily predetermining the eternal Lot of all his Creatures; and that Lot, as to the greater Part of them, a miserable one; and this for his own Glory ||.

This is the Scheme which represents the *Holy Scriptures* as the most equivocal and deceitful Book in the World; which, tho' filled, from first to last, with the loudest Calls, the kindest Invitations, the freest Promises, the vastest Encouragements; yet as having not one sincere Offer of real Mercy through the whole; and as making those seemingly kind and

* *Calvin Instit. B. III. c. 23. l. 7.*

† *C. 23, 24.*

|| Is not the Glory of God's *Wisdom*, and other Perfections, extremely eclipsed by such Decrees; by which God has made choice of no better Means to advance his own Honour and Glory, than such as *Tyrants* and *Bankrupts* would be ashamed of? See *Exam. of Tillenus*, p. 286.

gracious Declarations to Thousands and Millions, who are aforehand decreed to Damnation *.

This is the horrid Scheme which disrobes God of his *judicial Powers*, as well as of paternal Wisdom and Goodness; who, tho' he has declared, that with him *there is no Respect of Persons*; that he *would have all Men to be saved, and to come to the Knowledge of the Truth*; that he *hath no Pleasure in the Death of Sinners*; and that he *will judge all Men according to their Deeds done in the Body*; yet will really, after all, decide their Lot according to an eternal absolute Decree, irrespective to their Behaviour here †.

This is the Scheme which Lord Chancellor *King*, on the Creed, ascribes to *Simon Magus*, and his Followers ||; and which another Author says, was brought into the World by Astrologers and Fortune-tellers of the ancient Stoicks **.

This is the Scheme which tends so effectually to throw down Religion, and sap the Foundation of all Virtue, by depriving a Man of *Free-Agency*, of all Power to any Actions spiritually good; and by denying him to be in a *State of Trial*. For to what Purpose are Exhortations and Persuasions to Impossibilities? What Room is there for *Virtue*, and Actions morally good, when none can be performed, but under the Influence of irresistible Power; which makes them not the Actions of Men, but of that resistless Agent, whose Power overrules them?

What *Vice*, or vitious Actions can there be in Creatures pre-determined to them all, under a fatal Decree to be wicked; if such a Contradiction will

* God sets his Word before Men, on purpose that they may become more deaf and blind, says *Calvin*, Instit. B. III. ch. 24.

† *God would have all Men to be saved*, 1 Tim. ii. 4. If by ALL is meant only a few of every Kind, it would have been a more true Saying, *God would have all Men to be damned*.

|| See Crit. Hist. of the Creed.

** Impart. Cat. p. 81.

be admitted as a Man's being wicked by Necessity *.

The very Ideas of *Rewards* and *Punishments* are hereby effaced out of the Mind ; For what Reward, or what Praise can be due for what Men never did, but was done by another in and for them ? Or what Blame and Punishment can be due for Actions Men are pre-determined to, and cannot help or do the contrary ? Can there be Guilt where there is no Action ? Can there be Action where there is no Freedom or Choice ? Can there be Freedom where there is Necessity ? Is there not Necessity, where there is an absolute Decree, which affects the Means and the End, uniting them by an inseparable Concatenation.

Shall we place God, a God of infinite Goodness, at the Head of a Scheme which necessitates any of his rational immortal Creatures to trade with Hell and Damnation ; while a righteous and merciful Man regardeth the Life not only of his Child, but of his Beast ?

This is the Scheme which is so *unfriendly to Mankind*, as it represents Men under the *Power of Fate*, and consequently having no *fair Trial* for Life or Death.

* *Piscator*, *Maccovius*, and others, maintain, " That God hath so pre-determined the Will of every Man to every Action, that he cannot possibly do any more good than he doth, nor omit more Evil than he omitteth. *Piscat. ad Amic. dupl. Vorst. p. 171 AÆ. Synod. part 2m. p. 36. 37.*

This is a genuine, consistent Part of the Predestinarian Scheme ; true *Turkish* Divinity, that all Things are done Unavoidably : That all Events are Decreed, some that wou'd make one *laugh*, others *tremble*.

But *St. Paul* knew of no such Decrees, when he says, *His Hearts Desire and Prayer for ISRAEL is, that they may be saved*,—That God is able to graft them in again : What, tho' he had decreed not to do it ! Can God deny himself ! 'Tis plain *St. Paul* knew of no absolute Decrees to Salvation or Damnation. Some who appear in Defence of the *Calvinistical* Predestinarian Scheme, yet grant, " that to be wilful and arbitrary is wicked and foolish, therefore by no means to be ascrib'd to God." But does not this one just Concession overturn both the Doctrine of *absolute Decrees*, and of the *Imputation* of *Adam's Sin* to Posterity ; which even *Mr. Millar* resolves into an Act of God, adjudging them guilty, tho' in fact Innocent. *Rescue of the Assen. Cat. p. 18, 39.*

What

What Incouragement does it give to Prayer, Repentance, or any spiritual Duty, while it deprives Men of all *Ability* for them; and also takes from them almost all *Hope*, it being ten to one perhaps, or more Odds, that no Indeavours of theirs will, or possibly can bring them to Heaven, being already decreed to Hell!

Who would strive to *work out his Salvation*, who cannot possibly do it; who believes that his eternal Lot is pre-determined, that the Die is cast, and that no Cries, Cares, or Labours, can change his Fate? Who would be *up and doing*, when he may probably as well sit still; and who, if he *try*, can yet do nothing, nothing acceptable, not one Action spiritually good?

What a gloomy Darkness does this Scheme spread over Mankind! In what a dreadful Image is the good and blessed God drawn! Who can *love* GOD, while he believes it probable, that, previous to his own Behaviour, he has decreed his Damnation! Who will be drawn to *love* the LORD JESUS CHRIST, who believeth that he died not for one in ten of the Human Race, even of those to whom he sends his Gospel; when yet, without suffering any more, he could have died for all!

To what Purpose are the *Scriptures to be read*, if the *Elect* have no Concern with the Threatnings, nor the *Non-Elect* with the Promises, and *neither* of them with the Calls, Requirements, and Exhortations there? since the *Non-Elect* can never comply with them at all; nor the *Elect*, till irresistibly overruled; which makes it no Compliance or Action of theirs, but of him who thus acts upon them*.

Finally,

* If the *Spirit* work immediately and irresistibly, the *Word* is no Means or Instrument at all; much less a rational Instrument; for the Essence of an Instrument or Means is an *Aptness* to produce the Effect for which it was intended.

Finally, this is the Scheme which tends to slacken the Care and Diligence of *good Men*, who have nothing to do, but to suffer God to work upon them, which they cannot hinder; for who can resist Omnipotence? And it also imboldens *bad Men*, if not others, to Sin, by representing their Salvation as certain, if they are elected, (and it is easy for some Men to fancy they are) and by representing God as *not seeing*, and resolved *not to punish* their Sins; and which leads *all Men* (who have not Enthusiasm enough to conceit themselves elected) to Desperation, when it is so great Odds, they are decreed to be damned, and that no Indeavours will save them.

B. This is a terrible Harangue; I am amazed at the horrid Consequences you charge upon the *Predestinarian Scheme*; I hope it is clear of the worst of them, otherwise I would intirely give it up; but you will allow me to plead as well as I can in its Defence.

C. What you call *Harangue* may be reduced to proper, and what the Learned call *Syllogistical Argument*; by which it would farther appear, that every Paragraph carrieth in it a strong Proof of the Absurdity and Iniquity of your Scheme.

And tho', in our last Conversation, you are reckoned to have made a poor Defence of your Principles, I do not find that any of your Champions have furnished you with better Armour. They not only often talk in a *weaker* Manner than ever you did; but are guilty of those gross *Absurdities* and *Self-Contradictions*, which your plain honest

If a Man is bound to believe he is elected; and if he believe it, is he elected? Then will it not follow, that the *Object*, his Election, receives its Being and Truth from the *Act*, believing? Again,

Does it become true, that *Christ died for me*, only in Consequence of my Faith; then my Faith changes immutable Facts, and a False Doctrine into Truth. If it was True, that Christ died for me, before I believed it, then he died for all.

Understanding could never give into. However try your Strength over again.

B. You will not, I hope, pretend to say, That our Scheme carrieth in it any Cruelty or Hardship towards God's Elect.

C. No, no; but only unwise and partial Mercy such as we are sure God never can be guilty of; as sure as we are, that he is a just God and a Saviour. He will neither save nor damn Men, without any Reason at all on Mens Part, much less beforehand decree to do it.

B. But let me ask you, Sir, had God determined to leave all the Human Race in their Apostacy and Rebellions, and punish them for it, had this been any more Injustice or Cruelty, than his leaving and decreeing to leave the *fallen Angels* in their Sin and Misery?

C. Your Representation of the Case is unfair in itself, and inconsistent with your own Principles, and your Illustration of it is evasive.

Amongst the *fallen Angels* did God shew Mercy to some, everlasting Mercy, while he decreed others to Hell, who were no more guilty than the rest. Did he send a Proclamation of Pardon to them in general, while he had fore-ordained the greater Part of them to unavoidable and never-ceasing Misery? Or, did God offer them Pardon and Life on Terms which he knew they could not comply with, without irresistible Grace, (if it may be called Grace) while yet he had decreed never to give them that Grace? Were they called, exhorted, persuaded to accept a Salvation never purchased for them. Or, were they condemned to a heavier Damnation for not believing a Falshood, or for not doing an Impossibility?

Moreover, the *fallen Angels*, are personal voluntary Sinners; they are and shall be treated, by a righteous Judge, according to their own Share

of Guilt. They were not ruin'd in consequence of another's Transgression; nor, being all equally in a helpless State, is merciful Help sent to a few only, while the rest, infinite in Number, as nearly related to God, his own Offspring, are left to perish, to perish for ever, without any Help, tho' no more undeserving than others.

Pray, Friend, reconsider the Representation I made of the Case in our former Conversation, (Dial. p. 17, 18.) when, I think, I placed Matters in a fair and honest Light, without Jugling and Evasions; the Force of which Reasoning, and of the Image produced there yet standeth good.

Had God executed his Threatning against *Adam* with Rigour and Exactness, in the Sin that he sinned had he died, and there had been an End of the Human Race; nor had God been unjust in the Execution of his Threatning. But when he saw fit to continue the Race of Men, who, through the first Apostacy, would come into the World under great Disadvantages for Religion and Happiness; and when he decreed Help for a very few, this decreeing Help for those few is not brought in as an Objection to the Mercifulness of God. But the Question is, Where is the Pity of God, his Grace, the Sounding of his Bowels over those Millions of his own Children, for whom he decreed no Help, and whom he decreed to an unhappy Birth, and to condemn them for being unhappily born?

What becomes of the lovely Character of God, as *our Father in Heaven*, whose tender Mercies are over all his Works, and who has no Pleasure in the Death of Sinners, and who is the great Helper of the Helpless? Is that Scheme glorious to God, which disrobes him of the most glorious and lovely of all his Attributes, his GOODNESS?

B. Tho' your Scheme may seem more honourable to God's general Goodness, yet it detracts from

his particular Goodness, as it does not ascertain Salvation to any, while ours doth; tho', I must own, it is but to a very few.

C. Answer me, Friend, without shuffling; which is more honourable to God, as a wise, righteous, merciful Governor of the World, to suppose him putting Men *upon Trial*, ruling them as *moral Agents*, by Laws, Promises, Threatnings; by Application to their Reason, Hopes and Fears; and treating them at last according to *their own Behaviour*: Or, to suppose Men no moral Agents, destitute of Power from God, to do any *spiritual Good*, tho' required from them; and that their *State* (for I cannot properly say their *Actions*) here and hereafter, is pre-determined by an absolute unalterable Decree without any Regard to their Behaviour?

Is such an ascertaining Salvation to a few, as turns Men into mere *Machines*, passive Beings and Religion into mere *Mechanism*, or passive Impressions; which overthrows God's *moral Government*, and Man's State of Probation; and consequently takes away the whole Ground of a future Judgment; Is this Way of ascertaining Man's Salvation, either for the Honour of God, or the Comfort and Incouragement of Men, or any way friendly to Religion?

Is not the Salvation of Men sufficiently ascertain'd, by the Gospel's setting Life and Death before Men, and offering them all needful Assistance in the Way of Life? Is not this as far as reasonable and free Agents can justly desire their Salvation should be ascertain'd to them? And if God formerly saw that Numbers would accept of Life eternal on the Terms of the Gospel; was not this Ground of a Promise to his Son, that he should see his Seed and that the Pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his Hand? Could the Son of God desire that the Salvation of Men should be insured to them in any

othe

other Way, than that which leaves them, what God made them, reasonable Beings and free Agents *?

B. However, God is not, upon our Principles, chargeable with Unrighteousness, seeing he decreeth to damn no Man, but for Sin.

C. This Answer is equally evasive and ambiguous with many others; in regard you do not tell us, whether God condemns, and decrees to condemn Men for *their own Sin*, or for the Sin of *Adam*. If I mistake not, some of your Writers affirm, that the Threatning to *Adam* was of Death temporal, spiritual and eternal to him and all his Posterity, for that first Transgression. I hope you will not pretend to clear such a Threatning from *Unrighteousness*; and therefore that you will not charge such a Threatning on the righteous God.

Such a Predestination by which God, before all Worlds, decreed, that they who believed in his Son Jesus Christ, and became obedient to the Gospel, should be elected, adopted, justified, and upon Perseverance, should be glorified; and that the Unbelievers and Disobedient should be reprobated, blinded, hardened, and if they continued impertinent, should be damned. This we agree to, as conformable to Reason and the Gospel; we allow it no Unrighteousness in God to condemn Men for *their own personal Sins*, in proportion to the Nature and Number of them. This, you know, we contend for.

But is it no Contradiction to say, that God has decreed Salvation and Damnation *unconditionally*,

* Some who appear in Defence of the Predestinarian Scheme, yet allow that Men are *free*, having not only a *self-moving Power*, but a Power to *choose* what is agreeable,—and to *act* in consequence of their Choice. — And deny that Men are fatally *necessitated* to all their Actions, *Millar's Rescue*, p. 28, 81. But how this Concession, so necessary to the Being of Religion and Virtue, will consist with God's decreeing whatsoever comes to pass, let such Writers seriously consider.

and yet has afterwards prescribed in the Gospel the *Conditions* and *Terms* of both?

Is it no *Unrighteousness* to condemn Men to Hell Fire for the Sin of another, in which they had no Hand? Is it not premeditated Unrighteousness to decree so to do?

Is it no *Unrighteousness* to pre-determine Men to Sin, and by a pre-determined Concatenation of all the intermediate Causes, to necessitate them to it, and then to condemn them for doing what they were decreed to do, for committing what they could not but commit?

Is it no *Unrighteousness* to condemn Men to a much forer Damnation for refusing a Remedy, disbelieving and disobeying a Gospel, which they never had Power to accept, believe, and obey?

Is it no *Unrighteousness* to condemn Thousands of innocent Infants to Hell, only for a Transgression committed Hundreds and Thousands of Years before they were born *?

Should any earthly Father, Master, Judge, or King, thus deal with their Children, Servants, and Subjects, would not the World cry out of their Unrighteousness and Cruelty? And shall Man be more just than God? Or, shall we dare to encourage a Scheme which represents God as more unmerciful and unjust than any earthly Father? Shall God be thus represented by the pretended Preachers of the *Gospel* and of *free Grace*? Is it not every Man's Duty to oppose and confute Doctrines so monstrous in themselves, and so inglorious to God; tho' for so doing he be called an *Apostate*

* To say God is righteous, but not as Men understand Righteousness is a dreadful Refuge indeed; it is to deny that we have any Notion of Righteousness in God, and consequently, that we have any Notions of God. When *Abraham* pleaded, *Will not the Judge of all the Earth do right?* Did he not measure Righteousness in God, by the common and natural Idea of Righteousness amongst Men; one Instance of which is, not promiscuously to destroy the Righteous and the Wicked?

Deist, Heathen, by Men of little Sense, less Grace, and no Manners? See Dial. p. 19, 23.

Clemency in any earthly Father, or Prince, would be reckoned *Weakness* and *Folly*, if expressed in shewing Mercy to some rebellious Children and Subjects, who never rendred themselves one Jot worthier of that Mercy, than Thousands of others, who have yet no Share in it. The Instance therefore of *Pharaoh* (Dial. 20, 21.) returns upon your Party and their Principles with all its Force.

Some of your Friends sneer at my representing fallen Men as God's *Offspring*, *Creatures*, and *Children*; so merciful, so tender-hearted are they towards their helpless Fellow Creatures; but their cruel Sneers will not destroy those great and dear Relations between God and Man *.

B. Some of our Writers avoid the Force of your Arguments drawn from our Principles, against the Righteousness and Sincerity of God, by denying that there are ANY OFFER'S of Salvation made by God to Men, either to the Electèd, or the Non-electèd.

C. This goes to the Bottom of the Matter, opens their mystery of Iniquity, unvails the horrid Scheme; and surely will undeceive those poor Souls who have been deluded by the Sugar'd Phrases in which they have wrapped up the most dangerous Poyson.

I own, hereby your Preachers and Writers are consistent with themselves, and their Scheme; but very inconsistent with all the dictates of Reason, our Ideas of God, and the whole System of the Gospel.

The BIBLE is hereby knock'd down at once, and made to be the most delusive and cheating Book in the World. I hope, my Friend, you have more

* Some Christians argue as fiercely against the Salvability of their Fellow Christians, as if it was not only their *Opinion*, but their Interest and *Wish*, that all should be damned, but those of their particular Sect.

knowledge and Goodness, more Reverence for God, more Regard to Truth, more Love to your Bible, and more Compassion to Souls, than to abide by this Answer, tho' the Leaders of your Party shou'd be weak and confident enough to do it.

B. I own it shock'd me at first; I trembled to hear or read it, nor can I think of it, but with Concern and Grief: yet I am willing to hear what you have to say to it.

C. Need I say more than I have said; Does not every Christian Ear tingle at the Sound of so abominable a Tenet? All your Party's abusive Treatment of me is a Trifle; but such an Affront to God, such a home Thrust at the Gospel, so desperate a Stab given to the Bible, is not to be passed over.

I used to think, that every Preacher of Righteousness, whom God raised up and sent into the World, *Enoch, Noah, Lot, Abraham, Moses, Samuel, Jonah*, and the other Prophets, were sent with *Offers* of Mercy, conditional Offers of Pardon to sinful Men; and that the whole Bible was one standing Offer of Mercy to a guilty World. I always thought the Son of God and his Apostles were sent with *glad Tidings* to Men, Offers of Pardon, upon Repentance. But you report it as the Sense of your Leaders, that there is NOT ONE OFFER of Salvation in the whole Bible.

When God says to *Cain*, *If thou dost well, shalt not thou be accepted?* *Gen. iv. 7*; Is there no Offer of Acceptance here, tho' he should do ever so well? When the same good God saith, *O that there was such an Heart in them---that it might go well with them and their Children for ever*, *Deut. v. 29*, Chap. vi; Is there no Offer here of present and future Welfare, if they feared God, and kept his Commandments? When the same God saith, *To him who ordereth his Conversation aright, will I shew the Salvation of God*, *Psal. lxxix. 23*. Turn you

at my Reproof, I will pour out my Spirit upon you, Prov. i. 23. *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the Waters-----Incline your Ear, and your Soul shall live. Let the Wicked forsake his Way, and the unrighteous Man his Thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have Mercy upon him, to our God, who will abundantly pardon. Isa. lv. 1---7. If the wicked Man turn from his Wickedness, he shall surely live. Ezek. xxxiii. Return unto me, and I will return unto you. Mal. iii. 7.* Is there not a single Offer of Pardon, Life, and Salvation, in all this? Are they all vain Amusements, delusive Proposals, which have no Truth nor Sincerity in them?

Was there but one WELL of fresh Water in a Town, and the Owner of it should open it, and send a Messenger to proclaim in the Streets, That whosoever would might come to the Well, and take Water freely, without Money or Price; should we not call this *an Offer*, and a kind and gracious Offer; especially if the Inhabitants were likely to perish without it? But in case the Proprietor and Lord of the *Well*, knew that most of his Neighbours were already so weak, or lame, that they could not stir, being utterly unable to fetch one Drop of his Water; would not a Proclamation of Liberty, or a pretended Invitation, be all Grimace, and a very ungenerous Insult upon Wretches already in Misery?

Again, when our Lord preached his famous Sermon on the Mount, *Mat. 5th, 6th, and 7th*, did he not make one Offer of Salvation to his Hearers, not one conditional Promise? When he says, *Your Father, who seeth in secret, will reward you openly* ---- *Your heavenly Father will forgive your Trespases.* ---- *He who doth the Will of my Father shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* If these Texts are not to be understood as offering any Reward, any Forgiveness, any Part in Heaven, they have no Meaning at all.

When

When Christ says, *Go, preach the Gospel to every Creature; He who believeth---shall be saved.* Mark xvi. 16. is not Salvation here offered to any of God's lost Creatures? Tho' *Godliness hath the Promise of the Life which is to come.* 1 Tim. iv. 8; And tho' by the Force of the Gospel Promises, we are exhorted to *cleanse ourselves from all Filthiness---and to perfect Holiness*; Tho' *blessed are they who do his Commandments*; and tho' the Spirit and the Bride say,---*Whosoever will, let him take the Water of Life freely.* Revel. xxii. 14, 17; yet is all this Imposture and Delusion? Is there not one Offer, not one conditional Promise, that any poor Sinner can depend upon? Away with such Divinity from the Face of the Earth.

B. Perhaps our Preachers will say, that all these are only Declarations of God's Will determining or settling the Events of Things, or Predictions of the final Issue of Preaching the Gospel, in consequence of God's absolute Decrees.

C. Perhaps your Preachers will quibble away the whole Bible, and play Tricks with the wisest, the holiest, the most sincere, and serious Book that ever was wrote.

But pray, what Difference can you find between a *Promise* of Pardon, on certain Conditions, and a conditional *Offer*? If a Prince, by Writing, or by Messengers, proclaim and declare his Will, that all his Subjects who return to their Duty, shall be forgiven, would not every Man in his Senses take this for an Offer of Pardon?

When *Peter, Acts ii. 38. Chap. iii. 19.* in his Master's Name proclaims *Repentance and Remission of Sins*; upon the Principles of your Preachers, it must be thus paraphrased. "Men and Brethren, tho' I exhort and persuade you to Repentance, by the most powerful Motives, the Love of God, the Pity of a Saviour, the Hope of Life and
" Pardon,

“ Pardon, the Fear of Death and Damnation ; yet,
 “ mistake me not, I make you *no Offer*, no condi-
 “ tional Promise all this while ; no, God only im-
 “ ploys me, and other Ministers, to publish his ab-
 “ solute Decrees, of bringing over a small Part of
 “ Mankind to Salvation, who shall be effectually
 “ and irresistibly changed and saved, let them be-
 “ have as they will, and continue they ever so long
 “ in their Rebellions against God and his Son Christ ;
 “ as to the rest of you, you never being intended
 “ for Salvation, shall never have Power to repent
 “ and believe, or to do any one Action spiritually
 “ good, and therefore shall never be pardon’d
 “ and saved, should you ever so much endeavour
 “ after it *.”

I hope you will judge this an honest Paraphrase
 on your Preachers professed Principles ; Principles
 which, instead of making the Gospel *Glad Tidings*
 to a sinful, miserable, helpless World ; make it the
 most *terrifying News* that ever was brought into it.
 Instead of a fair and clear Call to Salvation, your
 Scheme makes the Gospel all a *Cheat and Juggle* ;
 instead of giving Sinners a Day for Heaven, it only
 reports, that, as to far the greatest Part of them,
 even where the Gospel is preached, they are fore-
 ordained to Condemnation ; and therefore puts no
 Opportunity into their Hands, except an Opportu-
 nity of increasing their Damnation.

Horrid Scheme ! The Image of the Devil, and
 the Mark of the Beast is upon it. It is high Time
 for every Christian to give it up. With what Face,
 with what Heart, can a Man of Sense preach such
 Doctrine to the World ! Who would be a *Minister*

* A late Writer makes a strange Concession, “ That God gives the
Non-Elect as much Grace, and of the same Kind too, as he giveth *his*
Chosen.” *Millar’s Rescue*, 158.

But why all this Waste of Grace, and how absurdly is it called *Grace*,
 while they are under an absolute reprobating Decree ; and while Christ
 never died for them ?

of *Christ* on these Terms, when he knows, that all he can do will not bring over one Soul to God, but such as are decreed to be brought over, tho' he should sit still and do nothing *?

But certainly the God of Heaven, the gracious Governor of the Universe, the Father of Spirits, the Lover of Souls, the Pitier of the Human Race, sends out his Ministers on a better Errand.

Nor do you produce a Word to vindicate God from the Charge which your Scheme fixes upon him, of damning Men for not believing Falshoods, and for not doing Impossibilities. Dial. p. 22.

B. Yes, I say, Men will only be condemned for their Sins.

C. Whether is *Unbelief* in a *Christ* who never died for them a Sin? Or is *Disobedience* to a Gospel which they never had Power to obey a Sin? If these are Sins, Sins which will be punished with everlasting Destruction, 2 *Thess.* i. 8, 9. then, upon the Principles of your Preachers, will not Men be damned for not believing Falshoods, and for not doing Impossibilities?

B. You'll allow me to apply this to the Heathen World, who have not heard the Gospel.

C. Tho' our Concern is chiefly with *Heathens*, *Jews*, and others, who have heard, do, or shall hear the Gospel; yet apply it where you please, it is certain God will condemn to Hell neither *Heathens* nor *Christians*, for being fallen in *Adam*, notwithstanding your Writers boldly assert it; for this would be to condemn them not for their *Sins*, but for their *Unhappiness*; it would be to condemn them not for *their own Sins*, but for the Sin of another. God will try and judge Men by the Law they are under, *Rom.* ii. and therefore, if he be a righteous

* After all, it will perhaps more affect, and sooner convince, some Writers and Preachers, that in the *Assemb. Catech.* *Christ* is said to be freely OFFERED to us in the Gospel, than all I have produced from God's Word.

Judge, will not condemn the *Heathens* for not believing a Gospel they never heard; nor will he condemn *Christians* for not obeying a Gospel they never could obey, *Rom. x. 14.*

B. However, those who are effectually called, and to whom the Gospel is come in Power, and in the Holy Ghost, may take Comfort in God's electing Love.

C. Then the Gospel, of which you make absolute Election a great and main Article, is *Glad Tidings* to no Sinner in the World, till he is actually converted; as none are before the Gospel is preached to them; that is, the Gospel is no *good News* at all to the lost World.

The Gospel came *in Power* and *in the Holy Ghost*, to the whole Church at *Thessalonica*, *1 Thess. i. 4, 5.* They are called God's *Elect*, *Verse 4. 2 Thess. ii. 13.* Yet amongst these, some had *not Faith*, were *unruly*, and *walked disorderly*, *1 Thess. v. 14. 2 Thess. iii. 1---14.* It is not therefore with respect to single Persons, nor with respect to any absolute Decree of their Salvation, that St. Paul calleth the *Thessalonians* God's *Elect*, *chosen to Salvation*; but on the Account of their being called *by the Gospel to the obtaining of the Glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Thess. ii. 14.*

To return, how *strangely comfortable* is a Doctrine, that all the World have Reason to be affrighted at; but which no Soul can possibly take any Comfort from, till he does actually love God, and is irresistibly drawn to him! And can that Doctrine have any Tendency to draw Men to love God, which they cannot possibly take any Comfort from till they do love him? And then they do not need this Doctrine to draw them to love God, whom they do already Love.

Allow this Doctrine of *Absolute Election* and *Reprobation* to be a Gospel Doctrine; and allow

that one in ten or eleven to whom the Gospel is preached, are elected: (your Party will judge this Allowance large eno'.) Can any Man in the World take just and rational Comfort from a Doctrine which makes it *Ten to one* he is for ever damned, do whatever he can to escape it? Can Men love God, when He is drawn under the dreadful Image of decreeing his Creatures arbitrarily to Damnation, who are not one Jot worse than those whom as arbitrarily he has decreed to Salvation! Is not the Belief of such a Doctrine eno' to make the greatest Part of the World go distracted, and run into the utmost Despair? Can a sensible, ingenuous, benevolent Temper, like to God and Jesus Christ, take any Pleasure in a Decree which leaveth the greatest part of his helpless Brethren to perish in remediless Misery, without one Day for Heaven, or the least offer of Saving Help? Must it not be a Hellish Pleasure that ariseth from such an Imagination? See *Dial.* p. 22, 23.

B. Is not the Comfort hence arising equal to what can arise from the Doctrine of God's Universal Love; notwithstanding which Love, a Man, nay the whole Race of Men may perish for ever.

C. The Case differs as widely, as between a Man's wilfully leaping down a Precipice, and being pushed down by an unseen Hand. Or between, a Physician's offering to cure a whole Town sick of the Plague, if they will accept his Help; and his administering effectual Remedies to a very few; while Thousands, in the same Circumstances, are deluded with vain Offers, the cruel Physician being resolved to let them perish.

One is a Scheme which represents God in all the Glories of his universal Pity, Charity and Grace, as a Father not willing that any of his fallen Children should perish.-----which carrieth in it the strongest Motives to turn to God, opening to every Man a door

of Hope.----Which chargeth Man's perishing wholly upon *Himself*, and his wilful Refusal of offered Mercy, not upon a *reprobating Decree*. It is a Scheme which represents God as doing every thing becoming a wise, good and powerful Father to bring Souls to Salvation.

The other Scheme has (previous to a Man's being Converted) not one lovely Line in it, carrieth in it not one Motive to turn to God, nor has one sincere offer of Mercy in it to lost Sinners.

B. You set forth our Doctrines as hideous indeed, like a black Thunder-Cloud ready to burst on the fallen Race of Men.----Yet are there several Texts which seem to speak of an *absolute Election*, and without any express mention of the Seed of *Abraham*, or of any national Election whatever.

C. I am perswaded neither you nor any of your Party will deny that the NATION of the *Jews* (not a few *single Persons* amongst them only) are called *God's Elect*, his Adopted, his Inheritance, a holy Nation, a peculiar People, &c.

In like Manner the Kingdom of Christ, the converted or Christian *Jews* and *Gentiles* have in the Gospel the same and like Titles applied to them; not in their *personal*, bur *social* Capacity, as Christian Churches.

Before God separated *Abraham*, and the *Abrahamick* Family from the rest of the Idolatrous World, religious People are never called *Gods Elect*, or a chosen People*. The Seed of *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, in their national Capacity, are called *God's Chosen* and *Elected*, as distinguished from the more corrupted Part of the World; tho' great Numbers of this chosen, elected People of God perish'd thro' Unbelief and Disobedience.---So under the Gospel, or in the Kingdom of the Messiah all who visibly

* See *Benson's Lett. on Prayer and Predestination*. Look on the Epistles.
imbrace

(70)
 imbrace the Gospel, and submit to Christ have the same Appellations of *Chosen* and *Elected* given to them, tho' many amongst these are false Professors, and many turn from the holy Commandment delivered to them. This was what God always intended, that the Gospel shou'd be preached to the *Gentiles*, that they might become Fellow-Heirs with the *Jews*, and his chosen People instead of the *Jews*, before he chose *Abraham*, or laid the Foundation of the *Jewish Ages* (the Jubilees) or the Foundation of the World. *Eph.* 1. 4. *Ch.* 3. 9.
 II *.

B. If your Account of the Matter be just; it would put an end to all Disputes about Unconditional Election and Reprobation; as having no manner of Foundation in the Bible. And I must confess what you say deserveth better Consideration. Let us now pass to another Point

C. With your Leave, Friend, before we conclude this Argument, I'll read to you a large passage from Dr. *Blackball*, late Lord Bishop of *Exeter*, which is so well wrote that I think you will not count it tedious, nor your Time mispent in attending to it, which is as follows †.

“ The Consideration of these Truths, that God is infinitely wise, powerful, and gracious, and bears a fatherly Affection to us, may serve fully to assure us of the Falshood of the Doctrine of *absolute Reprobation*; whatever Arguments are urged for the Proof of it, or howsoever some Texts of Scripture, as they have been expounded, or rather wrested, may seem to favour it.

“ For – I only desire those who are of that Opinion, and are uneasy in the Thoughts of it, (as they must be, unless they are very sanguine, or very self-conceited) to take into their serious Consideration the Argument urged in the Text by our Saviour, *If ye then, being evil, know how to give good Gifts unto your Children, how much more shall your Father, who is in Heaven, give good Things to those who ask him.* *Matth.* vii. 9, 10, 11.

“ What Opinion would they have of an *earthly Father*, who should deal so by his Children, as the Maintainers of this Doctrine do hold God dealeth by the Race of Mankind, who are more the Children of

* Look on *Rom.* xvi, 25.

† In his eighth Volume of Sermons.

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God, than of their natural Parents? What would they think of a Fa-
ther, who, before his Children were born, before they had done, or
were capable of doing Good or Evil, should peremptorily resolve within
himself to destroy or make away such a Proportion of them, a third,
fourth, or fifth Part of them? Or who, if he did suffer them to live a
while, should resolve, however, to take no Manner of Care of them, to
cast them out, and expose them helpless and naked, by which Means
they should as certainly perish, as if they had been made away with at
first, and strangled from the Birth? Would they think this Man a good
Father, or that he deserved the Name of a Father? Would they not
rather think he divested himself of all Humanity, was worse than the
worst of Brutes, tho' under the Shape of a Man?

“ Yet this Case, by no Means, comes up to the other; for what Com-
parison is there between temporal Evils and the eternal Torments of
Hell, to which the Reprobated are adjudged? And when there is not
above one in a Hundred who is not thus reprobated.

“ The Argument in the Text may be thus altered, If ye, tho' evil, do
not murder and destroy your Children, do not delight in putting them
to Grief, do not resolve beforehand, that whether they shall deserve
well or ill at your Hand, you will so plague and torment them, that
they should much better not have been born; much less can it be sup-
posed, that God, your heavenly Fathers, who is infinitely kind and
gracious, will deal in like manner with any of you; that he does so
order Things, by a preremptory and unconditionate Decree, (a Decree
founded only in his own Will and Pleasure, not made with any regard
to your future Behaviour) that after the utmost you can do to please
him, it should go as hard with you, as if you had done all you could
to provoke him?

“ Fear not then, that there is any such Decree. — Since you cannot
believe such a Decree, and, at the same time, believe that God is a
kind, loving, and gracious Father to all his Creatures; for you cannot,
I think, (I am sure I cannot) believe that he is kind, loving, and
gracious to those whom he reprobates, who yet are his Children no less
than others. — Fear not then — that he reprobates you to eternal
Death, before he had given you Life, or begun to make a Trial of
you.

“ Believe what the wise Hebrew says, *Never would God have made any
thing, if he had hated it. Wisd. xi. 24.* Believe St. Paul, that God
would have all Men to be saved. 1 Tim. ii. 4. Believe St. Peter, that
God is not willing that any should perish. *2 Pet. iii. 9.* At least [believe
the Son of God, who saith, *How oft would I have gathered thy Children
— and ye would not. Luke xiii. 34.*] Believe God himself, saying,
I have no Pleasure in the Death of him who dieth, saith the Lord God.
Ezek. xviii. 23. Believe him, at least, when he confirmeth his Decla-
ration by an Oath, *As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no Pleasure in
the Death of the Wicked, but that the Wicked turn from his Way, and
live. Ezek. xxxiii. 11.*

“ There is not one Place of Scripture affirming, that the Judgment
which God will pass upon Men, at the last Day, is grounded upon his
own absolute Decree, made concerning them, before they were born;
but the whole Tenor of the Scripture is of another Strain, *That God will
render unto every Man according to his Works.*”

Thus,

Thus, Friend, you see the Foundation of the absolute Predestinarian Scheme overturn'd; the Rest of the Building raised upon it must fall of course; therefore the other Branches of this Scheme, standing in Connection with this, may safely be passed over, and left as they are in the Dialogue, without any farther Support.

Yet if you are disposed to go on, I'll attend you.

ADAM'S Fall, and ORIGINAL SIN.

B. You seem to have, by far, too low and imperfect Notions of Original Sin; which is a Corruption of our Nature, wrought into our very Make and become thereby a Part of ourselves, with all the irregular Motions proceeding from it*.

C. I am persuaded the whole Posse of your Predestinarian Fathers and Brethren, will never be able to make more of it than I have allowed; but after all their great Wrestlings, must yield to the Judgment of the learned and pious *Zuinglius*, that great Reformer and Father of the Church, who appear'd in that glorious Work before *Calvin*, and writeth thus; " Let the Popish Doctors storm, ye
" we assert, that Original Sin is nothing more than
" that *Disease* which, by Inheritance, descendeth
" to us from *Adam*, the first Father of us all ----
" which carrieth no Guilt in it, nor in itself can
" expose to Damnation." Again, " what can I
" say plainer or shorter, than that Original Sin is
" not truly Sin; and that the Children of Christians
" are not, upon Account of this Distemper, doom'd
" to eternal Punishment. When I call it a *Fault*
" I use the Word not strictly, but metaphorically
" cally †."

This is talking like a Man of Sense, who had made his Escape from the Darkness and Labyrinth

* Rescue of the Assemb. Catech. p. 24, 51.

† See his Book of Baptism, Tract 3. *Alio, De Peccat. Orig.*

of the kingdom of Anti-Christ, And if, in contradiction to all the Principles of Truth, Justice, Reason, your Writers will go on to make all Posterity chargeable with *Adam's Sin*, and liable to eternal Misery as a Punishment thereof, they will deserve only Drollery and Scorn*.

I wish however your Writers would a little explain themselves on this Head, and tell us whether this be a Corruption of the *Soul*, or of the *Body*? And if it be wrought into their very *Make*, who has wrought it, but he who forms the Body and creates the Soul; let them then look to it, lest while they degrade God's Work, they do not also charge Sin and Folly to the Author. As it is more honourable to God, to suppose he maketh Man upright; and more humbling to Men, to suppose that they corrupt themselves, by subjecting the *Law of the Mind*, the Dictates of Reason and Conscience, to the *Law in the Members*, the Dictates of Bodily Appetites. *Rom. 7, 23*. So I apprehend it is more consonant to the Scriptures, and to the Sense of every rational, tender-hearted Father and Mother, to suppose new born Children, *Innocent*, than *Guilty*; for if not Guilty of any Sin of their own, it is less likely, and less possible they shou'd be guilty of the Sin of another. The Scriptures not only expressly call them *Innocents*. *Jer. 2, 34. Ch. 19, 4*. But our Lord himself makes them the Pattern and Standard to which all must be conformed, who wou'd enter into the kingdom of Heaven, *Mat. xviii. 3, 4*. *Except ye become as little Children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*. Does

* Hear the Sentiments of the Learned *Cicero*, "There are in our Minds the Seeds of Virtue, by which Nature would conduct us to Happiness, if they were suffered to grow up. But now, we are no sooner born, but we fall into a wretched Depravity and Corruption of Manners and Opinions; so that we seem almost to suck in Error with our Mother's Milk. *Tull. Tusc. per Bently. Lib. 3, Ch. 1*."

14

our Lord mean, except ye become guilty, filthy, corrupted and polluted; or except ye become pure and innocent, blameless and harmless?

B. But since the Fall, there is none Righteous, no not one. *Rom. iii, 10.* We are *by Nature Children of Wrath. Eph. ii. 3.* are *Shapen in Iniquity. Ps, 51. 5.* And as such must be hateful and displeasing to God.

C. Your People have a wonderful Talent at darkening and misapplying Scripture, that hereby they may misrepresent God, and abuse Man. The Description St. *Paul* gives of the Idolatrous World, or of the Apostate *Jews*, they apply to Men as Men, as Children of *Adam*, before they had corrupted themselves. And not only so, but make God *angry* at them, for the *Shape* himself had given them, and for their very *Conception*, tho' that be. wholly 'his own Work; for *He* has made us, not we our selves; nay to condemn Man to Hell (to Death eternal) for being unhappily born.

If *David*, or *David's* Child, was shapen in Iniquity, is this a Proof that other Men are so, that all Men are so? Is it a Proof that God is *angry* at Men for the Sin of their Parents; or that he will pour out eternal Wrath on them for Sins they knew nothing of? If there be any who are a *Holy Seed*, and *Children of the Covenant*, will this consist with their being at the same Time *Children of Wrath*?

Suppose any of your Advocates had been base born, or unlawfully begotten; would it be just for Men to *hate* them, or for God to *damn* them on that Account?

B. But *Adam* was our federal Head; his Posterity stood and fell in and with him; God made a Covenant with him for Posterity, which is the Ground of God's imputing his Sin to them.

C. What rash, absurd and contradictory Assertions are these! Where is your *Proof* of these Points?

Where

Where is this Covenant to be found, inclusive of *Adam* and all his Posterity?

How will you, or any for you, make it out that either God or Posterity chose *Adam*, as their Representative? Or, Suppose the Point; yet are Actions done by Representatives chargeable on the Principals, if they never expressly, nor implicitly, commissioned them to transact such an Affair for 'em, if they disapprove the Fact, and protest against the whole Proceeding?

If Posterity are made guilty by *God's Act* of Imputation; then they are not guilty by *Man's Act* of Propagation; then they are not guilty till God impute Guilt to them. Pray, which of these Ways of deriving Guilt on Posterity will your Writers abide by *?

Does God ever *impute* to Men what they never did, nor had any Hand in? Will he so impute it as to punish them for ever in Hell, for what they are certainly as innocent of as the Child unborn? Will he do it against his own great, equal, immutable Law, *That the Son shall not bear the Iniquity of the Father!* Ezek. xviii. 20.

Is this the Divinity of your Teachers? Is this the wise Way in which they would have you talk? Have they added any Light or Strength to your Argument? Or, have they not *wrote* much worse than ever you talked? If now and then you talk'd weakly (and who can do otherwise in so wretched

* A late Writer, in his own confused Way, says, "If Posterity had not *finned*, they cou'd not have *fallen*." But do not many Children *fall* to Misery, not thro' their own, but their Parents Sin? Again, "If they had not *finned in him*, they cou'd not have *fallen with him*." They cou'd neither sin *in him*, nor *fall* with him, before they had any Being; yet, when they came to be, might be very unhappy through his Sin and Fall. Again, "If *Adam* was not a *Covenanting Representative*, They (Posterity) were not upon any Account *Guilty*, but shou'd have been as absolutely *Innocent*, and as free from the Curse, as *Adam* was created." Thus original *Corruption* is given up, and the Whole of original Sin fixed on God's Act of Imputation; and this Imputation founded on an imaginary Covenant, in which Posterity were not, nor cou'd be.

Rescue of the Aff. Cat. p. 37. 39.

a Cause) you never talked quite so absurdly as they preach and write.

B. How come you off as to that Text, *By the Disobedience of one*, (or by one Act of Disobedience) *many were made Sinners*, Rom. v. 12, which you interpreted *Sufferers*; yet, as I remember, you offer'd no Text where the Word is taken in that Sense; besides, does not the other Branch of the Verse shew it should be taken in the proper Sense for criminal or guilty Persons?

C. My Interpretation agreeth with the Sense and Reason of Mankind, or with that great and plain Rule of Interpretation, "That no Scripture is to be taken in a Sense contradictory to Reason, to known Truths, to the Context, to other more plain Scriptures, or in any Sense injurious to God and Religion."

But your Sense of the Text is contrary to *Reason*, that a Child, Millions of Children, should be made in a proper Sense, Criminals, by the Act of a great Grandfather, dead one, two, three, or five Thousand Years ago. Your Sense is contrary to the *Context*, where are several equivalent Phrases clearly leading us by *Sinners*, to understand *Sufferers*, Mortals, Men liable to die, and adjudged to Death, as Verse 12. *DEATH entred by Sin* Verse 14. *DEATH reigned over them who had not sinned*. ---- Verse 15. *Thro' the Offence of one*, (or one Offence) *many* (the many) *are DEAD*. Verse 16. *Judgment was by one* (one Offence) *to Condemnation*. Verse 17. *By one Man's Offence* (or the one Offence of Man) *DEATH reigneth*. Verse 18. *As by the Offence of one* (or by one Offence) *Judgment came upon all Men to Condemnation*. These several Forms of Speech used by the same Writer, on the same Subject, in the same Place, sufficiently determine the Sense of being *made Sinners*, by the one Act of Disobedience of one Man: Unless you affirm

affirm, that Men may be made proper Sinners, without their own Consent, without one Act of Disobedience, or not having transgressed one Law. The Sin of *Adam* was Disobedience, if then we sinned in him, we sinned by Disobedience; whereas *St. Paul* over and over affirms, that this Disobedience was the one Act of one Man; but it brought *Death* on many, or render'd them liable to be treated as Sinners.

Again, your Sense of the Text is *contrary to many known and allowed Truths*; as, that nothing can act before it has a Being; that Sin is a personal Act, and the Transgression of a Law; that moral Acts and Habits of the vicious Kind, are no more conveyable, except in a moral Way, than those of the virtuous Kind.

Your Sense is *injurious to God*, as it supposeth him angry at, and resolveth to punish eternally some of his Creatures, for the Faults of others: Which is a distinct Doctrine from that of Childrens being liable to fare better or worse, in consequence of their Parents good or ill Behaviour.

Your Sense of the Text *abuseth Mankind*, as it represents them loaden with Guilt, great Criminals, liable and deserving to be hanged, burned, damned, as soon as born into the World; tho' every Mother thinks her own Child very innocent.

Let me add, If this Rule of Interpretation of Scripture be given up, (as your Sense of our Text crosseth it in every Part) I shall be glad to know how your Authors will expound, *This is my Body*, so as to get clear of Transubstantiation.

Besides, it is no unusual Way of Writing with *St. Paul*, and others, to name the Cause for the Effect, as *Christ was made SIN * for us*, 2 Cor. v. 21. *Sin lieth at the Door*, Gen. iv. 7. *They eat up the Sin of my People*, Hof. iv. 8. Where, by

* Αμαρτιαν.

Sin, is meant Offering and Sacrifice for Sin, or the Punishment of Sin.

Moreover, the other Clause in the Text confirms my Interpretation; for as no Man, not one in the World, is actually and properly *made Righteous*, by the Obedience of Christ, till they repent, believe, and obey Christ; when they are made Righteous in a forensick Sense, or are justified, and have a Right to Life, thro' the Righteousness or Obedience of Christ: So no Man is made actually and properly a *Sinner*, by the Disobedience of *Adam*; tho' he be hereby made more liable to both Sin and Death. Let *St. Paul* be his own Expositor; as in *Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive*, 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22.

And when your Writers urge that Text in *Ephes. ii. 3. By Nature Children of Wrath*, they forget that *St. Paul* speaks this of God's elected, chosen, predestinated People, Chap. i. 4, 5. who, upon their Principles, are always beloved, and never can be Children of Wrath, or liable to Condemnation.

However, I hope you'll allow, that none are created of God, or originally made *Children of Wrath*; but that Men make themselves so, by Habits of Vice growing up and prevailing, till they become a *second Nature*.

The same Rule of Interpretation by which I have been trying your Sense of one Text, will serve you to vindicate other Scriptures so frequently perverted by your Writers and Preachers, to the perplexing of weak Minds, and to the great Dishonour of the Bible.

B. But is there any Absurdity in asserting that Posterity share in the fatal Consequences of *Adam's* Disobedience?

C. No, this is the Point I allow and contend for.

B. And if Children are frequently brought under Obligations to their Ruin, through Covenants made by

by their Parents; may not Posterity then be bound by the Covenant of their Father *Adam*?

C. Children are bound by the Covenants their Parents entred into, just as far as they see it *their Interest* to stand to such Covenants, and no farther. Parents may annex the Privilege of injoying a Share in their Properties to certain Services to be done by their Children; but in case the Children are willing to relinquish all Right to such Properties of their Parents, they are not bound to the Services. Parents Contracts cannot make any Actions proper *Duty* in Children, or involve their Children in proper *Sin*; tho' they may intail Blessings or Miseries on them. Can you produce any such Covenant with *Adam*, his Conduct in breaking or keeping which, should make his Posterity either righteous Persons, or Sinners? Until you have done this, and other Tasks equally hard, this Article in the *Dialogue* stands firm; and I think you must judge the Reasonings it rather gain than lose Ground.

B. I acknowledge you talk in a rational Way, and seem to give some Light to the Subject; but your Explications are so inconsistent with what I have been taught from my Youth; and with what many eminent Divines have taught for some Ages, that I cannot be persuaded, at once, to quit my Scheme.

C. You know very well, that tho' I pay Respect to Learning, Age, and Candour; I do not give a blind Veneration to Teachers, and establish'd Articles; and had rather have Reason and Scripture on my Side, than all the Fathers of the Church *.

If we must be determined by a *Majority*, and by considerable *Antiquity*, against Reason and the

* This was the Sentiments of the learned *Zuinglius*, that the Orthodox Writers are to be read with Judgment, and to be brought to the Canonical Scriptures, as to a Touch-stone, to be tried there.

Vid. Melch. Adam. Vitæ Germ. Theol.

Word of God; let us, at once, go back into the Church of *Rome*, and renounce the *Profession*, as many do the *Principles* of the Reformation.

If you and I must not understand our Bibles *for ourselves*, with the best Helps we can obtain; pray name me the Man or the Men who must understand it *for us*, and whose Explications we are bound in Duty to accept, believe, and follow. See Dial p. 27.

Yet I own, with you, that when Subjects of Dispute are placed in the fairest Light, it is no easy Matter to give up the Judgment of Things we formerly made; especially when they concern Points which mistaken and passionate Parents and Teachers have pressed upon us, with very solemn Airs, and Doctrines of the greatest Moment.

But enough on this Head; if you think it worth your while, pray, Friend, go on.

FREE-GRACE and FREE-WILL.

B. Truly I have no great Heart to proceed in such Controversy; yet I am willing to see it out, and to do my best in it, if it be only to wipe off the Reproach of my former Weakness: To the Point therefore; I have seen and heard you accused as most vehemently and bitterly exclaiming against the Preachers of *Free-Grace*, and representing them as the greatest Enemies to it in the World.

C. The grand *Disparagers* of *Free-Grace*, your Friends call *Preachers* of it; *Arguments* proving them such, they call *Exclamations*; and the unanswerable *Force* of those Arguments, they call *Vehemence* and *Bitterness*. Thus *easy* is it for weak Minds to put wrong and odious Names on innocent and laudable Things; and so *natural* is it for corrupt Minds thus to do.

I own some *Warmth* appears in the Dialogue but not to the Degree of *Vehemence*; and a little

Banter

Banter, but no *Bitterness*. I own also, it would have been wrong, very wrong to have *called* any Set of People, or Preachers, *Enemies* to Free-Grace, if I had not *proved* them such, in consequence of their own Principles, by about half a Dozen Questions, each containing too strong an Argument for you Champions to dare to *incounter*, See Dial. p. 28.

B. But where is Free-Grace in your Scheme, on the Foot of which, tho' Christ died for all, yet is the Gospel sent comparatively to very few; nor is the Spirit, in his saving Influence, vouchsafed to many who hear it.

C. When we are upon the Nature of the Gospel, and the Universality of its Offers, there is no need to evade the Argument, by transferring the Scene to the Heathen World.

As gracious Overtures were made to the whole World by *Adam* and *Noah*; so the Apostolick Commission was to go into *all the World*, and to preach the Gospel to *every Creature*; this opens to us the Nature and Extent of the Gospel Covenant, and vindicates the Free-Grace of God; for I hope the Gospel was not to be preached, and Salvation offer'd to *unredeemed Sinners*, to Men afore-hand *sealed to Damnation*, and who *never had Power* from God to accept of Christ, and receive the Gospel, nor a sufficient Measure of the *Spirit* to convince them. On how vain and delusive an Errand were the Apostles sent, if this was the Case!

If the *God of Heaven* did his Part, in sending his Son at the most proper *Time*, and in the most proper *Part* of the World; and if the *Son of God* did his Part, all that became him as a Minister of God, a Preacher and Saviour, in order to spread the Gospel through the World; let us not transfer that Blame to *God* and *Christ*, which is chargeable wholly on Men, that the Gospel has spread no farther.

What Advantage the *Heathens*, who hear not of Christ, may receive through his Mediation, besides a Resurrection from the Dead, I suppose your Writers and Preachers will not pretend to determine.

However, if God expects no more from the *Heathens*, than that they live up to the Light they enjoy; if he will judge them by the Law they are under; and will make Allowances for the Times of Ignorance in which they are educated, according to *Acts* x. 34. 35. *Rom.* ii 11---14. *Acts* xvii. 30. This shews him to be a righteous and a gracious God: And if they obtain any farther Mercy through a Redeemer, this will still more magnify his Grace.

God's Way hath been gradually to enlighten the World; and it Popish Principles, a persecuting tyrannical Spirit, a Predestinarian Scheme, Party and uncharitable Zeal, the worldly Hearts and Lives of Christians hinder not; we hope the Gospel of Light and Truth, of Love and Grace, will spread fast over the Earth; and thereby Mankind be taught to know God, not as an arbitrary tyrannical Sovereign, determining Men's final Lot by absolute Decrees, without Respect to their future Behaviour; but as a *moral Governour*, ruling the World by wise and just Laws, as rational Agents ought to be ruled; and as a gracious *Father*, and merciful *Redeemer*, who would have all Men to be saved, and to come to the Knowledge of the Truth; and who hath been always doing *his Part*, to promote these great Ends.

So that instead of clearing your own Scheme, you propose a Difficulty, which lieth as much against God's governing the World at all, as against his saving it by a remedying Gospel, and the needful Influence of his Spirit.

B. You allow, as I remember, that our People, and others in our Way of Thinking, live upon Principles of *Free-Agency*, while they write and preach

preach against them; shou'd not this secure us from your bad Opinion of us, and from the Charge of *Antinomianism*?

C. As the famous Lord *Falkland* * observeth, an ill Life followeth very consequentially from their (the *Calvinistical*) Principle; and that those who hold it must be *bad Logicians*, if they be good Men.

The Tendency of strict *Calvinism* and *Antinomian* Doctrines to corrupt the Heart, is strongly expressed by the great *Grotius*†, who saith, "The Followers of *Melancton* were good and gentle; but the Followers of *Calvin* sour, and such as they imagined God himself to be, towards the greatest part of Mankind".

Now, if notwithstanding the Sourness of your Peoples Tempers, and the Badness of their Principles, † I allow that they may possibly live well; I hope they will not over-again call me *inconsistent*, for being so over Charitable in my Hope of them, and for my Concession in their Favour, that *They* may be good, tho' some of their *Principles* are very bad; But of this enough before; To return to the Argument; Are you, or your Friends for you able to overthrow the Doctrine of *Free-Agency*?

B. Truly, my Friends give me but little Assistance here; I have only heard them inlarge upon my own Observations, "That there is no Power in Man to any *Spiritually good Thing*; that this State of Impotency is owing to the *Fall*; that tho'

* Defence of the Discourse of Infallibility.

† *Vot. pro Pace.*

† The learned Mr *Jeseph Mede* owns, he had a Conceit that some Opinions are in a Sort *fatal* to some Men; by which, I suppose, he means no more, than that ill-natured Men are most susceptible of cruel ill-natured Principles. A Sense of this constitutional Distemper led him to inure with more Patience Men of contrary Minds, knowing that more goes to convince a Man than Reasons and Demonstrations; and made him more willing to bear Contradiction from some Sort of Men, than to make any Reply to them.

Mede's Works, 742, 752, 757.

this Doctrine may seem inconsistent with a *State of Trial*, yet it does not contradict our Obligations to Duty, nor the Doctrine of a future Judgment; that the regenerate are made *free to Good, &c.*

C. And can your good Sense and honest Mind bear the Repetition of such weak, absurd, inconsistent and irreligious Tenets? Can a Man be called *Free*, who is under a *necessitating Decree* to Sin? Is the Man free, who cannot do any thing else but Sin? Do your Writers attempt to give any better, or any other Account of *Freedom*, than I have done? Dare they *define* it?

If Men have no Power from God, even under the Gospel, to do any thing spiritually good, until irresistibly wrought in them; and yet are obliged, under the Penalty of Hell-Fire, to repent and believe the Gospel, to love God and their Neighbour, to do justly, to practise Sobriety, Mercy, Forgiveness, Charity, which surely are Things *Spiritually-Good*; then are not Men obliged to impossibilities? *

Is he a wise, just and gracious God, is he a merciful Redeemer, a Lover of Souls, who bindeth Men to these Impossibilities? Is he a tender-hearted Father, who damneth Men for not performing them?

Let your *Free-grace Men* try their Hands on these Points; tho' I know they love not to be ask'd Ques-

* The Argument, tho' often urged, is very strong, and never was, nor can be answered, " That if no Man does or can repent without such a Degree of God's Grace, as cannot be resisted, no Man's Repentance is commendable; nor one Man's Impenitence more blameable than another's. *Chorazin* and *Sidon* are both excusable. For, either this irresistible Grace is afforded to Men, or not; if it be, then Repentance is necessary, they cannot help it; if not, their Repentance is impossible.

See *Christ. Magaz.* p. 189.

How dishonourable to God is the Supposition, that he has no *Volunteers* in his Service, who serve him out of free Choice; but only such as are forced to obey by an Almighty Power; while *Satan* has numberless Slaves, who willingly and freely enter his Service!

p. 176.
tions,

ations, especially such as they know not how to answer.

When they constantly affirm, that, Man's having no Power to do good, is owing to his *Sin* and *Fall*; How ambiguous is this, since they dare not speak out, and tell us, whether they mean to *Adam's Sin*, or to every Man's *own Sin*. You know, I had allowed, that Men may sin themselves into a State of *Moral Impotency* to Duty; but this is quite differing from the Doctrine of Men's being destitute of *Free-Agency*, and all Power to obey the Gospel, previous to their Rejecting the Gospel and abusing Grace.

But attend, Friend, let all Men attend; Writers on your Side have not the Courage and Honesty plainly to deny that Men are in a STATE OF TRIAL, tho' a Consequence of their Principles; yet now and then they craftily insinuate this Article of their dark and hideous Scheme; and notwithstanding have the Modesty to set up for *Gospel-Preachers*, and *Free-Grace Divines*.

Hear, O Men, O Christians! you have never a Turn for Life Eternal; the Die is cast, your Lot is aforehand decreed and decided irrespectively to your Behaviour; The Gospel is a mere Amusement, all the Exhortations, Invitations, Calls, Perswasions, Promises, Terrors, Laws, Counsels, signify nothing at all to you; to *you*, who are no free Agents, who have no Power from God to comply, who are not upon Trial for Eternity, who cannot reverse the fatal Decree, nor alter your State, and gain a Part in Christ and Heaven, tho' you should do your best and wou'd ever so fain be saved. The Gospel is no Blessing to you, unless you happen to be elected, without any Reason; and it is ten to one, perhaps a hundred, or a thousand to one, you are not; if you be, you can know nothing at all of it, till you are converted; in which you will be *wholly Passive*,

Passive, it is God's Work in you ; for even under the Aids of the Gospel, you have no Power to turn to God ;---You may therefore as well *sit still*, as try to be saved. You are either aforehand decreed to Life, or doom'd to Death, and no Indeavours of yours can alter your eternal Lot.

Thus at one Dash, your Schematists, your bold, visionary Preachers and Writers over-turn God's moral Government, enervate the Gospel of Christ, sap the Foundation of Religion, of all Virtue and Vice, and leave an indelible Blot on the blessed God, and their Redeemer, and turn Men into Machines, capable of no religious Actions, being *no Agents* at all in a moral and religious Sense, but wholly passive, under Power irresistible and a Decree irreverfible.*

In all this, I think, I have done your Preachers and Writers Justice, and not misrepresented either their Sentiments, or the natural Consequences of them.

B. I must confess, that cou'd I see that our Scheme is inconsistent with Man's being in a *State of Trial*, or on his good Behaviour for another World, I would give it up. I do not like any such Inuendo's about it ; for tho' our Writers say that this Supposition of Man's not being in a State of Trial does not *overthrow or contradict the Doctrine of a future Judgment* ; I cannot see *any Need* of a future Judgment, except to try Men how they have behaved while in

* *Irenæus* observes, that they must put a wrong and forced Sense on many Thing, who will not rightly understand some one. *Multa male interpretari coguntur, qui unam recte intelligere non volunt.* Iren. Lib. 5.

That *one Thing* some Men will not understand, is the universal Promise of Grace and Acceptance made in the Gospel, to all Men, through Christ, the Redeemer of all.

Melancthon, that great and wise Reformer, says, Whereas the Promise is universal, neither are there in God contradictory Wills, there is a Necessity that some cause of this Difference (when of two equally called, one complies) should be in us,

Loc. Com. de Lib. Arb.

the Body, and to make the Justice of God conspicuous in his treating Men according to their Works : What need is there to call Men to an Account, who have no Accounts to give, who are no *Agents*, but only *Patients*, as to Religion, that is, who are not capable of any Religion at all. Nor can I see how the World will be judged in Righteousness, if Men must be *punished* for what either they never did, or cou'd not but do ; or *rewarded* for Actions not their own. And tho' they frequently tell us, that Man's being without Power, &c. does not take off his *Obligation to Duty*, I can't see the Justice and Equity of obliging Men to what they have no Power to do ; or how it can be called Duty. Yet still I think the *Drawings of God* necessary to Conversion.

C. So do I. I only object against *irresistible Drawings*, in Defence of which your best Writers say very little ; nor do I find any thing worth Notice in answer to the Absurdities and Contradictions attending that Part of your Scheme, urged in the Dialogue, p. 30, 31.

B. But must you not own, that Light and Truth often break in upon the Mind with irresistible Force, and work Convictions that a Man finds himself unable to withstand ?

C. This I own is often the Case, that many great Truths are set before the Mind with irresistible Evidence ; that many Ideas are raised, and Impressions made by a Ray of Heavenly Light, as it were, darted into the Soul, somewhat like to the Case of *St. Paul* ; yet I apprehend that after this Illumination, the Mind and Heart is at Liberty to consent or not consent ; to yield or stand it out ; to act up to Convictions, or to resist and stifle them : Unless you will deny that there is such a Case, as Sinning against Light, acting against Evidence, and stifling the Convictions of Conscience. Nay, I allow, that the Drawings of God by the Overtures and Perswa-

sions

sions of the Gospel, may in a *moral* Sense, be called irresistible ; as a Man cannot resist them, without violent Struggles, and a certain undoing himself.

B. There seems to be some Ground for your Distinction between irresistible *Illuminations of the Understanding*, and the *Conversion of the Heart and Consent of the Will* ; and between Irresistibleness in the *Physical* or Natural and in the *Moral* Sense which I shall farther consider.

Let me add, that I hear it often urged, that if a Man have involved himself in a State of Sin, out of which he cannot extricate himself, he is not, on that Score, less culpable for continuing in it.

C. But in Case he is involved in this State by another, is he still equally culpable? Or, if a Remedy is bro't and offered to him, in order to extricate himself out of this State, and he has no Power to accept the Offer and use the Remedy, is not this Offer delusive? Or, if a Remedy is pretended to be offered, and yet is not, is there Sincerity in this? Is this plain Dealing with helpless Sinners? Doth any earthly Father thus impose upon his impotent Children?

If a Man have drunk himself into a Fever, Punishment may be due for his Drunkenness ; but can he be justly punished for not escaping from his Fever, if he have no Power to do it? To command him to recover and be cured, is a *Tyrannical Command*, if no sufficient Means of Recovery are afforded him ; and to punish him for not being cured, while it is impossible he shou'd be cured, is *Cruelty* worse than brutish ; and to punish him forever, for not taking a Remedy he never cou'd take, or which never was sincerely offered him, would be *merciless* beyond all Imagination. Yet this is one Branch of your Preachers Antichristian, may I not call it, Diabolick Scheme ; The Iniquity of which is so flagrant, that it is wonderful any pious Minds,

Minds, of the least Discernment, should be deceived by the Colours put upon it.

B. Tho' I should grant, that God's Operations on the Hearts and Spirits of Men may be resisted; yet not so as to be finally and totally overcome.

C. How do you know this? If they may be resisted, then they are not irresistible; and if resistible in one Moment, why not in another; and if in every particular Moment, then surely in the whole, or to the End; unless the whole be more than all the Particulars.

Farther, either you must allow, that no internal Operations are imploy'd as to Thousands who hear the Gospel; who then, upon the Principles of your Writers, cannot believe and obey; and who, then, cannot be justly punish'd with everlasting Destruction, for not believing and obeying: Or, that the internal Operations of the Spirit may be overcome and frustrated, even totally and finally. Let your Preachers take which Side of the Argument they like best.

Did not *Israel* frustrate God's Grace, when God would have healed her? *Hos.* vii. 1. Did not the *Jews* frustrate God's Grace, when Christ would have gathered them, and they would not? *Luke* xiii. 34. Had they not a Day for knowing the Things which belonged to their Peace? *Luke* xix. 42. Did they not resist internal Operations, and overcome them, when they *closed their Eyes, stopped their Ears, hardened their Hearts, and would not be converted and healed?* *Acts* xxviii. 24---27*.

* Obj. *Deus potest Resistentes compellere.*

Resp. *Hoc in Inanimatis locum habet; non in Rationalibus; quæ si aliena Voluntate ad aliquid adducantur, perdunt liberum Arbitrium, & sic Virtutem, & sic recte factorum laudem, malefactorum vituperium.*

Gregor. Nyssen. Orat. Catech.

I fear some others, besides the *Jews*, are guilty of resisting Light, and stifling Conviction of both Truth and Duty; and are resolved, tho' in ever so bad a Cause, not to yield.

Are you disposed to go on?

Of the RIGHTEOUSNESS of CHRIST.

B. Yes, a Word or two about the Doctrine of the *imputed Righteousness of Christ*, and our *Justification by that alone*.

Tho' you did not name the Text, yet you seem'd to refer to *Isa. lxiv. 6.* which all our Preachers say, is the Confession of good Men, that their *believed Righteousness* is as *filthy Rags*; and in this Sense they constantly use the Phrase in their Prayers.

C. Your Preachers are so apt to pervert, abuse and misapply Scripture, that they must be well look'd to before they are trusted.

The Point in question concerning the *Imputation of Christ's Righteousness, &c.* does not at all depend upon the Sense of that Text; yet it may be worth our while to consider it, to prevent good Men from misunderstanding it, and bad Men from misrepresenting it. In Verse 5. it is written, *Thou meetest him who rejoiceth and WORKETH Righteousness.* St. John also says, *He who DOETH Righteousness is righteous,* 1 John iii. 7. St. Peter also says *He who feareth God, and WORKETH Righteousness is accepted with God,* Acts x. 35. Gospel, acceptable Righteousness then lieth in a holy Practice in Conformity to Christ and his Gospel. God declareth he delighteth in and approveth such Righteousness, and such righteous Men. Can we now suppose the Prophet would, in the same Breath, introduce the *pious Jews* speaking so disparagingly of what God had been just approving, and what the Gospel so much insists on?

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pectations, and made no Account of them, in comparison of what he gain'd by Christ *.

He renounced the Righteousness he had as a *Jew*, to obtain the Righteousness of a *Christian*, or which is of God, by Faith in Christ. But what is all this to his renouncing Holiness, Gospel Obedience, keeping the Commands of God! Did he ever renounce Service or Sufferings for Christ? Did he ever renounce fighting the good Fight of Faith? Did he ever renounce Love and Charity, and those Fruits of the Spirit, those Tempers and Works which he so earnestly recommends to the *Galatians* and *Ephesians*, and which he so solemnly chargeth Timothy to recommend to others? Did he ever renounce what our Lord telleth us will pass so well in the Account of the great Day?

Yet your Preachers constantly represent St. Paul as renouncing his *moral Righteousness*, that is, his Likeness to God, and his Obedience since his Conversion; that is, all his Preaching of Christ, all his Labours and Sufferings in the glorious Cause of Christianity, all his pressing forward for the Prize of the high Calling of God in Christ Jesus. How falsely and how absurdly they thus represent St. Paul, I leave you to judge.

B. For my Part, I dare not say a Word against a holy Frame of Soul, and an obedient fruitful Life; or that Righteousness which lieth in Imitation of God, in following after Christ, and in Conformity to his Gospel. Nor am I able to answer your Way of Reasoning about the Imputation of the Righteousness of Christ; yet as I have been taught from my Infancy, that we are justified by the Righteousness of Christ imputed to us, &c. and as it is a Doctrine all our pious Ancestors believed, I cannot willingly let it go.

* See Pierce on this Text.

C. I own it very difficult to get rid of Notions early imbib'd, even after they appear erroneous. We see Instances of it, in all Countries and Ages, how hard it is to root out Opinions, and persuade People to break off Customs, tho' ever so silly or wicked, which they have long imbraced and practis'd, by Tradition from their Ancestors.

I allow of all the Regard that is due to Antiquity, and to the Piety of our Fathers; but do you think that Respect to Antiquity obligeth us to receive all ancient Opinions?

B. No; only such as are true; for Truth is more ancient than Error, be Error ever so old; as the Father of Truth is more ancient than the Father of Lies.

C. Then Reverence for our Fathers, tho' ever so learned or pious, does not require us to receive all their Dictates, does it?

B. No; for then all Children must receive all the Dictates of their Fathers, who were learned and pious; and yet learned and pious Men have delivered contradictory Dictates.

C. For what Reason then must we receive them?

B. Because they are true.

C. Then must we not reject them, if false?

B. Every Doctrine that is false ought to be rejected; but the Doctrines of pious and learned Ancestors ought not suddenly, much less presumptuously and confidently to be rejected.

C. I allow careful and serious Examination is due to the Doctrines of learned and pious Men, before they be rejected: But you seem to be against all Examination.

B. No; as you have observed, I count or examine Money after my Father and Friend; I cannot then in Reason deny the Lawfulness or Expediency of examining the Doctrines of Religion, which are of much more moment than Money.

C.

C.

C. If upon Examination, fair, serious, deliberate Examination, any Opinions of our Fathers appear false, any Customs weak or ridiculous, ought we to reject the former, and break off the latter?

B. To this I cannot object, without affronting my own Understanding, and crossing my Conscience; or indeed without opposing all Truth and all Reformation.

C. This is the Method I take, and would persuade you to take, as to all Opinions in Religion and particularly as to this, *the Imputation of the Righteousness of Christ*, and our being justified by it.

B. I am willing to examine it a little farther, if you think you can give me any more Light, or help me to understand it better.

C. I shall open it with as much Clearness and Brevity as I am able; to which End, let me ask: What do you mean by being justified?

B. I have read and heard a deal about *Justification*, before I could arrive at any clear Notion about it; but I understand by it the *Forgiveness of our Sins*, so as not to be punish'd for them in another World, and our being pronounced and treated as just and righteous Persons in the last Judgment.

C. I do not object to your Account; but who do you think will obtain, or have a Right to this Justification, or to be absolved, pardon'd, and saved?

B. Those who truly repent of their Sins, receive the Gospel, live according to it, and are faithful to the Death.

C. Very right. Now, what do you understand by the *Righteousness of Christ*?

B. His perfect Conformity to his Father's Will; or doing and suffering all that the Father gave him

to do and suffer, till he had finish'd his Undertaking
for Man's Salvation.

C. Right again. Now, what do you mean by
imputing?

B. By *imputing* we generally understand reckon-
ing, accounting or laying to the Charge of a Per-
son; as we impute the Dialogue to such a Man,
that is, we reckon him the Author of it, we charge
him with it, as his Doing or Work.

C. Right still. Now, apply this, by trying to un-
derstand to whom God does impute the Righteous-
ness of Christ; in what Sense he can be said to im-
pute it to us, and how it can be imputed for our
Justification; and the Point will be soon ended.

B. I find no Difficulty in God's imputing the
Righteousness of *his Son* to his Son who perform'd
it: But I perceive, by the common Notions we
have of imputing, I shall soon be non-plus'd, if I
affirm, that God imputes, or charges to the Ac-
count of any Person, Actions, whether good or
bad, which he never did. Yet still I have a con-
fused Opinion of the Righteousness of Christ's being
imputed to us.

C. If no one *single Act* of the Righteousness of
Christ is imputed to us, then the *Whole* of it is
not.

B. Very true, for the Whole consists of all the
Parts.

C. Now the particular Acts of the Righteousness
of Christ are his Incarnation, his Submission to
Baptism, to Poverty, to Fasting, his Victory over
Satan, his Preaching, his Miracles, his Confession
before *Pilate*, his Obedience to the Death, his giv-
ing a Commission to his Apostles, his Intercession,
his Governing and Judging the World. If God
impute these to us, as our Actions, is not this to
make us Mediators, Saviours, Miracle Workers,---
and to have died for ourselves? If he impute none
of

of these particular Acts of Obedience and Righteousness to us, then he does not impute the Whole. If he does not impute the Righteousness of Christ to us at all, then not for our Justification: And then such ambiguous, if not erroneous Phrases ought to be laid aside, at least not insisted on as containing an essential and fundamental Doctrine especially since they are Phrases no where to be found in the New Testament.

B. I confess I am at a Loss, and am ready to think, that some Christians have laid too great Stress on some Phrases they have not well understood, tho', I doubt not, their Meaning was very good. Yet I have one Argument in our Favour. If Christ be our *Surety* and Representative, are not his Actions to be considered as ours, and justly imputed to us?

C. I acknowledge, that if we consider God as Creditor, and ourselves as Debtors, and Christ as our *Surety*, in a proper Sense; then if he has paid all our Debts, and done all the Service due from us; we are clear, we owe God no Service, we are not in Debt by our Sins, God cannot justly call us to an Account for them.

Thus you see what dangerous and horrid Consequences attend the Doctrine of Christ's being strictly and properly our *Surety*. It will be equally absurd to suppose him our *Representative*, so that I dare say, you will not insist on it.

Yet as Christ is MEDIATOR of the better Covenant, in a Lay and General Sense he may be called our *Surety*, as he has secured God's Honour, and will secure to his People their Blessings on the Conditions stipulated in that Covenant. Now the whole Righteousness of Christ, and every Part of it, upon your own Concessions, can be justly imputed, reckon'd, charged to Christ alone, as Mediator; not to us, we had no Hand at all in it.

But

But for the sake of Christ, and his perfect Righteousness and Obedience; on account of his Undertaking, what he did and suffer'd, in whom God declared himself well pleased; thro' his Mediation; according to his Gospel, God will justify, accept, pardon, save all penitent, believing, obedient Christians; and will impute their Faith (Repentance and imperfect Obedience) for Righteousness, in and thro' Christ, whose perfect Righteousness is not only accepted, but made a Means of our Righteousness and Acceptance.

In this View of the Case, God imputes to *Christ* what was really his, what he did and suffer'd: And he imputes to *us*, what, thro' Gospel Grace, and the Assistance of the Spirit, is really ours, our Faith, Repentance, sincere Obedience; and accepts penitent obedient Believers as Righteous, according to the Plan of the Gospel, which sets before us the Righteousness of Christ as a Sacrifice, and as a Pattern.

B. Your Account seems fair and intelligible, and free from those Difficulties and Clouds which hung about my former Notions. I intend better to consider it: In the mean time I concur with you, that if God will, by and thro' Jesus Christ, pardon, justify, accept and save true Penitents, who believe and obey the Gospel of his Son.---This is enough for Christians to agree in, as to this Article; and we should talk over any Points of Difficulty relating to it with Calmness and Moderation.

C. I am glad to see you come into such catholick Sentiments, and so generous a Temper; and hope you'll think it Time to give up such a dark, confused, unscriptural Form of Words, as *being justified by the Righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by Faith alone*.

B. I own I have not found *one Text*, nor any of our Writers for me, where *the Righteousness of Christ*

Christ is said to be imputed to us; but some of them say, that where it is written, that Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for Righteousness, Rom. iv. 33; it is meant not of Abraham's Faith, but of the Object of his Faith, namely Christ, or the Righteousness of Christ.

C. That is; not what St. Paul says, *Abraham's Faith*; but what your Preachers say, in Contradiction to St. Paul, the *Object* of his Faith was imputed for Righteousness.

I have been used to think, that the *Object* of *Abraham's Faith* was the Word and Promise of God, that he should have a Son, &c. for it is said, *The Word of the Lord came to him*, Gen. xv. 4. And he *believed God*, Rom. iv. 3, 9, 22; and that this Faith comprehended *Obedience*, and might therefore be called an obeying Faith, or a faithful Obedience, as it is explained, Gen. xxii. 18. *In thy Seed shall all Nations be blessed, because thou hast OBEY'D my Voice.*

But your Preachers, who have so wonderful an Art at making plain Texts dark, and of expounding away the obvious Meaning of God's Word, and putting their own systematick Notions in the Room of it, say, *not Abraham's Faith*, tho' *Moses* and *Paul* say it was; but the *Righteousness of Christ* was accounted ---- tho' *Moses* and *Paul* have not a Word about it.

I freely allow, as I did before, that we are *made Righteous* by, or thro' the Obedience of Christ, in the same Sense and Way in which we are *made Sinners* by the Disobedience of Adam: But as God does not reckon that we are guilty of eating the forbidden Fruit; no more does God reckon that we died on the Cross for our own Sins, or that Christ's Obedience was our Obedience. God always reckons right, and imputes to no Man what he

he never did; tho' your Preachers and Writers reckon so very wrong*.

B. However, you cannot say, that by our Doctrine we make void the Law, and give any Countenance and Incouragement to a loose Life.

C. Can any Doctrine more incourage Men in Sin, than that of being *decreed by God to Sin*? that *God sees no Sin in the Elected*, nor will punish them for it? that they may be saved by the *Righteousness of another*, who has fulfilled the Law for them, tho' they are not themselves righteous by doing Righteousness?

What Doctrine can possibly prevent Mens loving God, or more effectually destroy the Root of all Religion, than representing God *as fore-ordaining the greatest Part of his Creatures to eternal, inevitable Misery; and punishing them in unquenchable Flames for the Sin of another*?

What Doctrine has a more direct Tendency to extinguish Brotherly and Neighbourly Love, to beget a sour, unbenevolent Temper towards Mankind, than that which represents Men *as hateful to God, even before they have done any Ill, and as doom'd before-hand to Hell*? How apt will Men be to justify themselves in Hatred to those whom they imagine God hates!

* Yet a late Writer has the Confidence and Weakness to affirm, "that Posterity could not have been *made Sinners*; if that *one Man's* Disobedience had not been theirs;" that is, if that one Man's Disobedience had not been the Disobedience of Millions more than that *one Man*, tho' yet unborn. He goes on, "*Adam's first Sin*—was the Sin of the whole Human Race—we are Partners in his Guilt," even before our Existence. Men must be strangely intoxicated with systematick Notions, before they can think and talk at this Rate. Again, "Because God cannot account any Person Righteous, who is not so; he imputes the Righteousness of Christ to us, that is, reckons it to us as our own." That is, because God *cannot* do it, yet he *does* account us Righteous who are not so; and he does it by accounting That our Righteousness which is not ours. Is not this owing to the Weakness he charges on the Assembly, *viz.* too closely following the common System?

Rescue of the Assemb. Catech. p. 40, 43, 44, 78, 89.

What Doctrine tends more to discourage all Virtue, every Instance of practical Religion and Godliness, than that *Men can do nothing spiritually good*, till it is irresistibly wrought in them; and then it is not *their Doing*, but God's; then it is not *Religion*, which is a free and chosen Practice, but a forced necessary Event?

Thus, as might be shew'd in more Instances, has the Scheme of your Preachers a *natural Tendency* to root all Religion out of the World. And as it has this *bad Tendency*, so it has produced very *bad Effects*, in confounding and distracting good Men and Women, and in strengthening the Hands of the Wicked. The Testimony of the late Bishop Burnet may serve instead of other Instances, who tells us of a Sort of People in King *Edward VI's* Time, who built so much upon the received Opinion of Predestination, that they thought they might live as they list, since nothing could resist an absolute Decree: Nor did those who advanced that Opinion know well how to hinder People from making such Inferences from it; all they did was to warn them not to pry too much into those Secrets: But if the Opinion was true, there was no need of much Prying to make such Conclusions from it. This had a very ill Effect upon the Lives of many, who thought they were let loose from all Obligations, and that was indeed the greatest Scandal of the Reformation *.

Now, whether the Doctrine of your Preachers be *poisonous* or no, I leave you and the World to judge.

And as to the Point we are upon, I'll only add, that it has just as much Sense in it to talk of imputing another's *Happiness* to an unhappy Man, as of imputing another's *Righteousness* to an unrighteous

* Abridg. of the Hist. of the Refor. Vol. II. p. 82.

Man. Or, as a late learned Writer has it, " They who are righteous only by the Righteousness of another, must expect to be happy only by the Happiness of another *."

PERSEVERANCE.

B. Tho' none of our Writers have help'd me to one plain Text for the *Imputation of Christ's Righteousness* to either righteous or unrighteous Men; they have furnish'd me with some Texts to support the Doctrine of *Perseverance*, and with an Answer to your Objections against it, drawn from *Ezek. xviii.* who speaks of a Man righteous *before Men*, falling from his legal, out-side, hypocritical Righteousness. But that as to *David, Peter*, and other good Men, it was not possible for them to die in their Sin, and their Sins were actually pardon'd for Christ's sake †.

C. If your Champions have no stronger Texts for the Certainty and Necessity of the Saints Perseverance, and against the Possibility of their Falling away, than I have yet seen produced, the Foundation of their Building is very sandy. They make that to be a *Promise* of God, which is only the Sentiment of *Job, That the Righteous shall hold on his Way*, *Job xvii. 9.* Had *Job*, think you, learned *Calvin's* System? Was his Head filled with Predestinarian Notions, and the Necessity of Perseverance? Rather, was not all his Meaning, according to *Bishop Patrick*, " That righteous Men would not be moved by such weak Arguments as *Job's*

* *Burnet de Fide & Offic.*

† *Millar*, with all his Bigotry, owns the Possibility of the Saints falling away; tho' against the plainest Suppositions of Scripture, he denies the Fact: For his Words are, " These Propositions, the Saints *may* fall away, the Saints *shall not* fall away, may be both true."

But if, as he says, " God give the Non Elect as *much* Grace, and of the same kind as he gives the Elect," the Saints not only may, but *do* fall away.

Rescue, p. 98, 158.

Friends brought, to change their Course of Righteousness, and Purposes of doing justly, but would grow better by Affliction, and add Perseverance to their Piety."

If the Apostle was confident, that God, who had begun to plant a Church at *Philippi*, would go on with his Work; or that God, who had begun to incline them to Liberality, would go on to perfect that good Work in their Church, and increase their Liberality, *Phil. i. 6.* what has this to do with the Doctrine of the Impossibility of the falling away of single Persons? Or, did the Apostles *Hope* prevent that Church from falling away? Do not many Christian Ministers express the like Hope and Confidence concerning their Hearers, who yet have no Notion of the Impossibility of Apostacy?

Cannot Christ be said to bring in *everlasting Righteousness*, *Dan. ix. 24.* a Covenant, whose Terms of Acceptance should never be altered without any Respect to this Doctrine? And cannot God be said to *justify* and *glorify* the converted *Gentiles*, *Rom. viii. 30.* without establishing the Principle of *Fatality*, or what *Melancthon* called *Stoical Enthusiasm* *?

Is it not surprizing to see and hear what an absurd and contradictory Turn your Authors and Preachers usually give to *Ezek. xviii. 33* ----- by which they would make the sacred Writers talk as absolute Nonsense, as themselves often do; in supposing that the Prophet, by a *righteous Man's turning from his Righteousness, and committing Sin* meaneth a Hypocrite's turning; from what? From his Hypocrisy, from his feign'd Righteousness. What else can he turn from? And shall he *die* for this? Is not mere *outward Righteousness* called by the Son and the Spirit of God, Hypocrisy?

* Vindicat. of the Catech. revised, p. 36.

And will a Hypocrite's turning from his Hypocrisy be *Death* to him? On the contrary, doth not God call him a truly *just Man*, Verse 9. and promise to *give him Life*?

According to your Preachers Rule of Interpretation, by a *wicked Man's turning from his Wickedness*, Verse 21, 27. may be meant a real good *Man* --- and by his turning to do what is *lawful* and *right*, may be meant turning to do what is *sinful* and *wrong*, trusting in his own Righteousness; and by *saving his Soul alive*, may be meant, he shall *surely die*.

By the same Rule, *renewing again to Repentance*, Heb. vi. 4. may mean, renewing again to Hypocrisy, Disingenuity, Unrighteousness.

Thus rather than give up a darling Scheme, or any Branch of it; the Honour of the sacred Writers must be sacrificed, and the Scriptures loaded with Contradictions. For nothing is plainer, than that a *wicked Man* may turn from his Wickedness, a *righteous Man* may turn from his Righteousness.

The Scriptures lead us to consider Perseverance as a *Duty*, which may or may not be performed; not as a decreed necessary Event. Thus St. Paul takes it, Ephes. vi. 10---19. and elsewhere, *Finally, be strong in the Lord,---watching with all Perseverance*. He look'd on our present State as a State of *War*, where Men may conquer, or be conquer'd; as a *Race*, in which Men may win or loose; as a *Stage* or *Theatre*, where Men may behave well or ill; as a *Station of Trust*, where Talents may be improved or misimproved; and consequently as a *STATE OF TRIAL*. He chargeth *Perseverance*, not as an inevitable Event, on God's Decree; but as an Event depending upon their own Courage and Watchfulness. The like he does in his own instance, 1 Cor. ix. 24---27. *I run,---I fight,---I subdue*

subdue my Body,---lest after all I should be a Cast-away, a Reprobate.*

The Apostle *Paul*, tho' a chosen Vessel, supposed it possible he might be a *Cast-away*, might be reprobated or disapproved by his Lord and Master. In like manner, *Rom. viii. 38.* he layeth the Hope and Assurance of not being *separated from the Love of God in Christ*, upon Resolution and Watchfulness.

While such Chapters as *1 Cor. x. Heb. vi.* and *Rev. ii. and iii. Ezek. xviii.* remain in the Bible a Man must have a strong Faith to believe, and a strong Forehead to assert, the Impossibility of a good Man's falling away.

Nor is it any infallible Mark of Modesty in you Writers and Preachers to assert, it was impossible for *David* and *Peter* to die in their Sins; tho' they had like Passions with other Men, and as much deserving Death as many others. While they do not pretend to prove a Grant of a *Lease* for a certain Term of Life; or a Promise of either *Grace* or *Time* to repent.

And whereas you say, that *their Sins were actually pardon'd*; I suppose you mean, before they were repented of, or before committed; And is not this a fine Doctrine to countenance Sin, to prevent Repentance and Reformation, and to give Apostate Sinners delusive Hopes!

Had you, Friend, in our former Conversation talk'd at the rate some of your Party do, you might very justly have been represented, not only as a *weak*, but as a *distracted* Man, and a Patron of Unrighteousness. But, tho' your very Constitution, I apprehend, as well as your Education, render you capable of Enthusiastick Notions; yet I believe you will never rave at the rate some of your Friends do.

* Ἀπόρριμος.

Judas fell from his *Election* (John vi. 70. *Have I not elected* you twelve, and one of you is a DEVIL.*) He fell also from his Ministry and Apostleship, which was certainly the *Grace*, or *Favour*, of God; tho' some of your Party deny it.

B. Tho' such may fall away as have been indued with a *superficial Knowledge of the heavenly Gift*, yet such as have tasted and partaken of the heavenly Manna by real Faith cannot. ---- Nor are the Scripture Cautions any *Arguments* against Perseverance, but only *Means* to secure it.

C. Whether St. Paul mean of a slight superficial Knowledge, &c. I leave you to judge, when you have read the Text over again. *Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly Gift, and were made Partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the Powers of the World to come, if THEY FALL AWAY, to renew them again unto Repentance.* Did not all eat the same spiritual Meat, and drink the same spiritual Drink, even of that Rock, which was Christ: Yet with many of them God was not pleased, they were destroy'd, and fell short through Unbelief. *Cor. x. 1---11.* See also *2 Pet. ii. 20, 21, 22.*

Tho' Exhortations, Persuasions, Warnings, Cautions, are not Arguments against Perseverance; they are Arguments, and, if wise Men use them, if God order them to be used, unanswerable Arguments for the Possibility of Mens falling away.

To allow that Exhortations, Cautions, &c. are *Means*, is to give up the whole Cause, unless they are *infallible Means*, and necessarily produce the Effect; but they are not infallible Means; they were resisted, and failed, in the Instances of *David* and *Peter*, and the Apostate *Israelites*.

* Εξελεξαμεν.

Besides, if they are *Means*, they have an Aptitude to produce the Effect, where ever apply'd but they are apply'd equally to all Men who hear the Gospel; yet, upon your Principles, they can have no Aptitude to produce Perseverance in either the *Elected*, or *Non-Elected*; not in the *Elected* who are wrought on by irresistible Power, not by fallible Means; nor in the *Non-Elect*, for they are by Decree, precluded from all persevering Grace.

In a Word, upon the Scheme of your Writers Men are *forced to Heaven*, by an absolute Decree and irresistible Grace. They get not there by *striving*, by taking the Kingdom with Violence, but by *giving all Diligence* to make their Calling and Election sure: On the other hand, Multitudes are *forced down to Hell*, in Opposition to, or notwithstanding all Indeavours and Strivings to escape this Horrid Scheme! But *let him who standeth take heed lest he fall*.

B. What say you to that Distinction used by some of our Friends, that, tho' God *see Sin in his own People*, Sin deserving Death, by his Omniscience, and *chastizeth* them for it; yet he never *punisheth* them, or is really angry at them, for he seeth them as clothed with the Righteousness of Christ.

C. Thus they make the Righteousness of Christ a Cloak to cover all their Villainies; and, like the Popish Altars, the Sanctuary of Adulterers. But let these Abusers of Christ, and Disparagers of his Grace know, that notwithstanding all their vain Pretences to be God's Elect, if they *bring not forth good Fruit*, they shall be *hewn down, and cast into the Fire*; and too late feel, what they would not see, the Vanity of distinguishing between being *chastened* and *punished* in Hell Fire. Crying *Lord, Lord*, and pleading his Righteousness, and their Election, will not save them, if they *have not done the Will of his Father in Heaven*; but, under all their

their holy Claims, have been *Workers of Iniquity*.
 Mat. vii. 19----27.

Suppose a Man obtain a Justice of the Peace's Warrant, to send his Son or Servant to the House of Correction, to be kept to hard Labour and whipp'd, for robbing his Father, or running away from his Master; this is *Chastizement*; but, to be sure, it is also *Punishment*; no; ask the Lad, the Goaler, the Spectators, the Justice, whether this be *Punishment*?

Your Writers represent you as a *weak, ridiculous* Defender of your own Principles; but they have now saved your Credit, and brought the Ridicule upon themselves: And had they been only ridiculous, we should have left them to the Care of the Laughers; but when, with superior Airs, they would put upon their Readers, not only the most notorious Falshoods, but the most dangerous and destructive Errors, as serious and important Doctrines, they deserve worse Treatment than a little Ridicule.

If God *see no Sin* in his People, no Actions as Sin, which he disapproves, or so far disapproves, as to punish them for it, either in this World, or the other; what a Door is here open'd (especially to God's Elect People, as they fancy and call themselves) to all Manner and Degrees of Immorality, Falshood and Lewdness! ----- Yet your Preachers would not be thought ANTINOMIANS.

B. Is not that Text, *Numb. xxiii. 21. He hath not beheld Iniquity in Jacob, &c.* an expers Proof that God seeth no Sin in his own People?

C. I pity the Poverty of your Authors, and imagine, by this time, you are convinced of their Weakness; from first to last their *chief Talent* is display'd in perverting and misapplying Scripture.

If we take the Text as it is in our Bibles; it is not spoken concerning a few, pious, elected Men,
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but of the whole elected Body of *Israel*, all the Posterity of *Jacob*, who, notwithstanding their being *God's Elect*, apostatized, rebelled, fell, and were cut off through Unbelief: So that, in this View, it does no way serve, but quite spoils your wretched Cause.

But the Context and Design of the Writer lead us to another Reading, which learned Men * say the *Hebrew* Original will justify; namely, *He doth not approve of Outrage against the Posterity of Jacob, nor Vexation against Israel.*

What now becomes of your Writers Triumph? But some Men make up with Confidence, what is wanting in Evidence; and are most bold where they have least Proof.

Thus having once more set before you the Errors, Immoralities, and bad Tendencies of your whole Scheme, I hope you will at once quit it, and give up a Set of Principles so contradictory to our Ideas of God, of Truth, of Righteousness, of Wisdom, and all Goodness; and so inconsistent with the whole Stream and the whole Design of the Gospel.

B. I own myself at a Loss, and unable to get clear of the Objections lying against some of our Tenets; yet I seem to be in a Labyrinth, or walking on enchanted Ground, and know not well how to get out. The Charm is weakned, but not quite broke; Principles, which have always been inculcated as *fundamental*, with grave and solemn Airs, and by Men, whom we look on as Men of God, are not easily given up †.

* See Essay for a new Translat. and *Patrick* on the Place.

† As it is not unsuitable to the Subject, so, I apprehend, it will not be unacceptable to the Reader, to subjoin an Abstract of a Letter from Dr. *Potter*, Dean of *Windsor*, Provost of *Queen's College, Oxon*, Chaplain to King *Charles I.* wrote to Mr. *Vicars*, July 7, 1620.

“ — For some Years in my Youth, when I was most ignorant, was most confident; before I knew the true State of the Questions, could peremptorily resolve them all, and upon every Occasion, in the

In the mean time, what have you to reply on the Head of *Baptism*?

BAPTISM.

C. I should have said *very little* on it before, had not your Preachers and People urged it so *very much*; and so vehemently insisted on the *Rebap-*

Pulpit, I was girding and railing upon these new Hereticks, the *Arminians*; I could not find Words enough to decypher their Doctrine, and I abhorred them as venomous Enemies to the Grace of God. — Yet all this while I took Things upon Trust, and knew not their Doctrines, but from their Enemies. And because my Conscience would often tell me in secret, that Railing would not carry it in Matters of Religion, without Reason and Divine Authority, — I betook myself seriously to examine the Writings of both Parties, yet confident that the Truth was on my own Side; — nor did I dare to look on any Books, till I had look'd up to Heaven by Prayer. — In my Search, my first and last Resolution was and is, only to believe what my Lord tells me in his Book; — and to mark not what Men *say*, but what they *prove*. Tho' I must confess I much favour'd my own Side, and read what was said against it with Indignation, especially when I was pinched, and found many Objections which I could not answer. — I found in all Ages many eager Spirits, who could not believe they had *Zeal*, unless they were furious; or had any *Faith*, unless they wanted all Charity. — The Reasons of the *Arminians* so far convinced me, as not rashly to censure, damn, and anathematize them. — I also collected, that those Points of Difference are no necessary catholick Verities, nor essential to Faith; but Matters merely of Opinion, — wherein a Man may err, or be ignorant, without Danger to his Soul. — For my Part, I honour Truth with all my Heart, next after the God of Truth. Any Error abuseth the Understanding; an Error in Religion corrupts it. But I am a Christian and Rational, and I cannot be convinced but with Scripture and Reason; but cannot be chidden, frightened, or forced into an Opinion: One good *Argument* sways with me more than twenty *Declamations*. — Falshood is fearful, and loves to go disguised: Truth hates nothing more than Masking, she longs and loves to appear in her native Beauty; after rigorous Examination she remaineth the same.

As to *absolute Decrees*; our first Reformers said over those Lessons they had learned in the *Romish* Schools. — I hold all necessary Truths to be clearly revealed in God's Book. — Reason shall drive from any Opinion, and Truth ever command me. — I shall study more to *live*, than to *dispute*, for none but the Devil gains by these Contentions, who keeps their *Heads* thus busied, while he seizes upon their *Hearts*.

For my *SERMON*; I desire you to give it a fair and benign Interpretation, and to take it no worse than I intended it, when it was preached. It and I had more Thanks than we deserved, from the best of my Auditors. — My Reputation is dear to me, and I could not be patient in the Reproach and Suspicion of *Heresy*. — Why may not our Hearts be united, tho' our Heads differ?"

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tization of those who have been baptized in Infancy, and thereby acknowledged as *Children of the Covenant*: Nor was I ever inclined to molest any Man, who, in a peaceable manner, differed from me on that Head.

If it be no more than *probable*, that the Jews baptized the Children of the *Gentile* Profelites, (as the Authors and Interpreters of their *Misna* do assert *) and that the Apostles understood and executed their Commission in Conformity to their *Jewish* Notions and Customs; and also that Infants were early baptized in the Christian Church; this *Probability*, to carry the Matter no higher, may be thought, by equal Judges, Ground sufficient for the Practice. But my Moderation on this Article doth not please your Party, who seem resolved against being either convinced or pleased.

Yet nothing, I think, they have produced, shews the Question one Jot *more important* than I had represented it; so that we need not be in a World of Pain about the Issue of it.

Nor does any thing they have said at all invalidate the Distinction I made between *efficacious* and *significative* Baptism. Therefore the Quantity of Water used in Baptism is not of the last Consequence: Therefore, upon my Principles, I need not baptize an Infant in a Hurry, whether by Washing, Sprinkling, or Plunging it; nor retract my Sentiments, that Baptism is not *efficacious*, but *declarative*.

Nothing I have yet seen or heard sheweth the Incongruity of washing a *Part*, a principal Part, of the Body for the *Whole*; as was practised, when the twelve Pillars (or, according to some, the twelve young Men) were sprinkled, instead of the whole Congregation of *Israel*, *Exod. xxiv.* That

* See *Fortuita Sacra*, p. 54, &c. Also *Wall* and *Gale* on the Controversy.

this was Fact appears hence; that half of the Blood was not enough to sprinkle the whole Congregation, Men, Women, and Children, being two or three Millions of People. That the Pillars would answer no other End, but to signify or represent the twelve Tribes in this sprinkling. Thus it appear'd to the learned *Ainsworth*, to *Pareus*, to Bishop *Patrick*, and, I believe, to every Man in his Senſes, except your Defenders.

Now if the Pillars ſignified the People, here is the *Sign* for the *Thing ſignified*. And, unleſs *Moses* can be ſuppoſed to touch every Point in each Pillar (or Heap of Stones) with the Blood, here is a *Part* for the *Whole*.

I allow, that ſprinkling or waſhing the Face does not ſignify the Death, Burial, and Reſurrection of Chriſt; tho' dipping the Face or Head in Water may do it; yet, as I obſerved to you before, it may ſignify and declare to the World, *Faith* in theſe great Events, with a *Reſolution* to become the Diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt; or the *Answer* of a *good Conſcience towards God*, 1 Pet. iii. 21. And thus the great Ends of Baptiſm may be as well answered, as by plunging the whole Body under Water. This indeed will better waſh away the *Filth of the Fleſh*, but the other may as ſtrongly engage to rectify the *Diſorders of the Spirit*.

The chief, if not the ſole View of St. *Paul*, in *Rom. vi. 4.---6.* and in *Col. ii. 11, 12.* is, not to deſcribe the *Mode* of Baptiſm by its Similitude to the Circumciſion, Crucifixion, Death, Burial, and Reſurrection of Chriſt; but to ſhew the End and Deſign of Baptiſm, as it is an Obligation to Newneſs of Life. This appears not only from his comparing Baptiſm to, or calling it *Circumciſion*; tho' there is no Similitude in the *Modes* of performing theſe; but alſo from his repreſenting Chriſtians as *crucified* with Chriſt; tho' there is no Likeneſs between

between Baptism (or any other Christian Ceremonies) and Christ's Crucifixion; nothing in the Christian Institution is an express Image of Christ dying on the Cross; but only such Rites and Ceremonies as are expressive of Faith in his Crucifixion, and of Engagement to circumcise and wash the Heart, and to crucify the sinful Lusts and Affections of the Flesh.

Now, if the great *End* of Baptism be obtain'd there does 'not appear any Necessity of a Similitude in the *Mode* of it to our Lord's Burial and Resurrection, any more than to his Circumcision and Crucifixion; but only Faith in a buried and risen Christ, with a Resolution to die unto Sin, (by real Repentance and Reformation) and to live unto God and Righteousness, by a Conversation agreeable to the Gospel.

Let your Friends shew the greater *moral Tendency* of the one *Mode*, rather than of the other; or, what Purposes of holy Living are better answered by one than the other, in case the Profession of the Christian Faith accompany both, made by Christian Parents in the one Case, and by the Parties themselves in the other.

A *Bit of Bread* does not so adequately signify and represent the crucified, broken Body of Christ as a Statue, a wounded Statue would do; yet eating a Bit of Bread in suitable Circumstances, may signify and declare *Faith* in Christ crucified, as well as eating a whole Image of Bread.

B. But is it not a wrong Step, and absurd in itself, first to enter Children as Disciples, and then to teach them?

C. No; but exactly right, and according to the Custom of Schools; they are first to be made Proselytes, or Disciples, and then to be taught all Things whatsoever Christ has commanded. *Mat. xxvii. 18.*

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This was also agreeable to the *Jewish* Customs, with which the Apostles were well acquainted. Parents before admitted as Proselytes by Circumcision (Baptism and Sacrifice) were to be instructed so far in the Principles of the *Jewish* Religion, as enabled them to consent to imbrace it; then, after Admission, to be farther taught all Things relating to it: But the *Children* of these Proselytes were first admitted by Baptism and Circumcision; and then, as soon as capable, were instructed in all Things relating to Religion commanded of God by *Moses*. In like manner are Proselytes to Christ to be treated; and, we think, by good Authority.

B. But you have not proved, that *Jewish* Children were entred into their Church by Circumcision, &c.

C. Why will you dishonour your own Understanding, by urging every silly and groundless Cavil you find in the Writers on your Side! Was not Circumcision the Sign of God's Covenant with *Abraham* and his Seed? Was not practising this Sign an entring the Parties into that Covenant? And were not all who were entred into the Covenant thereby made, or acknowledged as Members of the Congregation or Church? Are not Children, even little Children represented in *Deut. xxix.* as entring into God's Covenant, and belonging to the Congregation or Church of *Israel*, God's peculiar and elected People? And is there any other Sign of Admission into the Congregation of Christians, appointed by Christ, for Proselytes, old and young, or adult and Infants, beside Baptism?

B. What you say as to *Decency* and *Safety* is mere Calumny, or false Accusation.

C. Had I indeed accused your Way of Dipping as *unsafe* and *indecent*, perhaps many Instances of your Practice might be produced to make it good*.

* See *Burkitt* on Infant Baptism.

But when I only represented our Way as more safe on the Account both of *Health* and *Chastity*; the Rant and the Calumny lieth on your Side.

If your Dippers always consult a *Physician*, and imploy *Women* only in dipping Women, I shall have less to object against their Sort of Cold-Baths. Till then, perhaps cool Heads and chaste Minds may think my Objection has some Weight in it, notwithstanding the Anger or the Arrogance of some pedantick Writers.

B. Your Keeness leadeth me to observe, how improper a Man you are to oppose a blind, bodily, uncharitable Zeal, who are yourself so guilty.

C. That with some Warmth and Severity I have opposed and confuted your Party's Scheme of dangerous and destructive Errors, I freely own: But whether my Zeal be rational and just, or it be blind, bold, and abusive, I leave others to judge.

If I have acknowledged your Party as Christians, as Disciples of Christ; then, with all my *Zeal*, I have not lost my *Charity*, as too many of your People and Preachers have theirs; tho' I do not rank you amongst them.

When we expose the Errors of the Church of *Rome*, tho' no more dangerous than some of yours, tho' we do it with Keeness and Severity; and when we ridicule their Church Fopperies, and the ridiculous Tricks of their Preachers, when we paint their Tyranny, Bigotry, and uncharitable Zeal in most lively and strong Colours; no doubt many in that Church, especially the Priests, will call this *intemperate Zeal*; but will any sober Protestant call it so?

B. No. How severely soever the Principles and Practices of the Church of *Rome* are exposed on the 5th of *November*, we never blame our Ministers, because we think they deserve it all.

Now,

Now, I think we have done with our main Scheme, the Defences of which, I must own, appear much weaker than I at first apprehended. Notwithstanding our Friends Writings meet with Esteem, are much read, and will, I believe, produce great Effects.

The Rights of CHRISTIANS and CHRISTIAN MINISTERS vindicated, in the Person of the supposed Author of the DIALOGUE.

C. The *Weak* and the *Passionate* are by far the greatest Part of Mankind: Amongst the Priests and the Mob at *Ephesus*, tho' the whole City was moved and gathered into a riotous Assembly; there was but one thinking, sensible, cool-headed Man, and that was the *Town-Clerk*, *Acts* xix. No wonder then, if weak and passionate Writings are accepted in the World; or, if *Error*, which is multifarious, spread more than Truth, which is uniform; especially Errors which countenance Men in an immoral Life, and encourage Sinners in false Hopes.

For, as a learned *French* Protestant judiciously observeth, " Oftentimes those Opinions which have less Truth in them do yet prevail; because that *Prudence* which maintains the true Opinion is mild and patient: Whereas *Rashness*, which defends the false, is of a forward, eager, and ambitious Nature *."

Ever since the World was peopled, I fear *Error* has always had the *Majority* on its Side. A little *Poison* may produce more bad Effects, than many wholesome Remedies can prevent or cure: Or, as a foreign Writer has it, *One Chimney-sweeper may defile more than ten Servants can clean* †.

* *Monf. Daille* of the right Use of the Fathers, p. 161.

† *Brant's Hist. of the Reform.* Vol. III. p. 118.

B. You represent our People as weak, passionate and erroneous; but if you'll allow me the Freedom, I'll venture to tell you, that great Numbers, besides our small Body, and many of them grave and religious People, speak of you, or whoever be the Author of the *Dialogue*, as holding very dangerous Opinions, and in particular, of being an *Arian* and an *Arminian*.

C. As to my own Sentiments, I have spoke them with great Openness, and, I hope, fully justified them. Nor do I doubt but that Gentleman, who is reported to be the Author of the *Dialogue*, is able to defend himself.

It has been the wicked Art of too many amongst every Party, when *Arguments* have failed, to call *hard* and *bad Names*. Thus the Mob was spirited up by their Divines, even at *Dort*, under the Wings of that pacifick, calm, and venerable Synod of *Calvinists*, to cry after the learned and pious *Episcopius* and his Brethren, *Stone the Rogues, Stone the Rogues* *.

Calling a Man *Arian* or *Arminian* has sometimes produced the same Effects amongst the Dissenters, as calling him *Presbyterian* has amongst our Church Bigots; or as calling him *Heretick* has done amongst the Papists. He becomes the Object of vulgar Hatred, and every Zealot has a Stone to throw at him, as if he was a *mad Dog*.

But a little Reflection will enable you to see, that as in the Mouth of a Papist, *Heretick* is usually the Mark or Denomination of an upright, conscientious Christian; and as in the Mouth of a Church Bigot, *Presbyterian* means an honest Protestant; so, in the Mouth of a Dissenting Zealot, *Arian* and *Arminian* are almost certain Marks of a sincere, inquisitive, learned Man. And indeed few Men were more

* *Brant*, Vol. III. p. 129, 181.

minent for Learning, Piety, and a peaceable Disposition than *Arminius*; and the Presbyter *Arius* might, for ought I know, be as wise and good a Man as *Alexander* his Bishop. However, the Servant is not greater than his Lord; if they have persecuted him, by calling him *Samaritan* and *Nazarene*; let not any of his faithful Ministers lay it to Heart, that they are nicknamed *Arians*, *Arminians*, *Hereticks*, and *Schismaticks*. *John* xv. 20.

I have seen a Mastive walking honestly and inoffensively *after his Master*, thro' a Town; when all the ill-natured and ill-manner'd Dogs in the street have, unprovoked, attack'd him; and had he not mended his Pace, his Innocency and Duty to his Master would not have protected him from calling a Sacrifice to the Rage of the Brutes.

B. Your Observations are but too just; and your Images lively; and there are some who may deserve the keen Reproof couched in them: But there are many of the *better Sort* of People who have represented that Gentleman in a bad Light.

C. I doubt not many well-meaning Men, thro' a false Zeal, strong Prejudices, and the crafty Insinuations and Influence of worse People, are drawn into unjustifiable Methods, without any mischiveous Intention. These, I own, ought to be treated with Gentleness and Candor. But where People, not of the best Temper and Lives, by secret Girds, by minting, improving, and carrying about little Stories, by fixing odious Names, by sly Insinuations and House-Tattle, and by direct Calumnies, are worrying to death a good Man's Name; Doth not this deserve the severest Censure? Might they not *with the same good Conscience*, rob him of his Purse? Which had a sensible Man rather part with, his good Name, or his Money?

B. I hate and detest all such Methods, and am sorry to see any of our Friends guilty of them.
But,

But, on the other hand, ought not Ministers, of all Men, to be careful not to provoke Mens Passions and inflame their Spirits, by bringing in any new and strange Opinions?

C. I freely own, that Ministers, Christian Teachers, of all others, ought not to be Men of Pride and Contention, Fury and Passion, who attempt to force Things upon People by *Noise* and Clamour, or by the Dint of *Authority*, either their own, or that of other fallible Men, without or against Evidence. This is not the Way to serve the Cause of Christ and Truth, which need not the Wrath of Man for their Support. Human Authority, blind Rage, Confidence, and Ill-nature, never served a good Cause, and always make a bad one worse. But studious, honest Men, Lovers of Truth and Goodness, are usually moderate, full of Meekness and Charity, far from an over-bearing Temper, and are apt to allow others the same just Liberty they claim themselves.

Now, if with Modesty, Decency, and Charity towards those who differ from him, the Gentleman you refer to, only openeth the Gospel as well as he is able, freely declareth his own Sense of Things, and leaveth his People to judge, believe, and act upon Evidence; is HE answerable for the Rage and Passion which either the Learned or Vulgar imploy against him, any more than St. *Paul* was for the Uproars occasioned by his preaching the Gospel of his Master? *Acts* xvii. and xxi.

But to state the Case fairly, and in a few Words. I suppose you will allow, that every *Christian Minister* and Clergyman hath an unquestionable RIGHT to study the BIBLE; nay, that he OUGHT to do it, as he would be found faithful; and to study it, if able, in the Original Languages, and to go to the Fountain Head, or as near it as he can reach.

B. This I readily allow, and wish the Bible was more studied.

C. Well, if he study the Scriptures, give himself up to Reading, Meditation, and Prayer; and God, the Father of Light, bless his Labours, and answer his Prayers, with increased Knowledge; hath he not a *Right*, and is it not his *Duty*, to admit this Light, to accept this Knowledge, as a Gift from God, with all Thankfulness?

B. Yes sure; he ought not to quench the Spirit.

C. Then, when God has illuminated his Mind, and given him a fuller Understanding of the Christian Doctrine, and a better Acquaintance with his Bible, than when he set out at twenty-two or twenty-four; the next Question is, What Use must he make of his Light and Knowledge? Must he *keep it to himself*; only to enlarge his own Mind, better his own Temper, and correct his own Life?

B. No. He certainly ought to *communicate to others* the Truths he judgeth will be profitable to them, to make them Partakers of his own Gifts and Improvements. He ought not to *bury his Talent*; but is bound, as a *Member* of the great Society of Mankind, to spread Knowledge amongst his Fellow-Creatures; and, as a *Minister*, to be a candle in a Candlestick, to give Light to others.

C. I am glad to hear you make these frank and free Concessions; allowing that as he ought to *use*, he ought to *act* up to his private Judgment: For certainly a Man had better give up his *Understanding*, and think and study no more, than give up his *Honesty*, by not instructing others in those useful Truths he himself believeth; since, as a considerable Writer observeth, "To force a Man to *profess* and teach against Conscience, and to be *silent* in spite of Conscience, is equally unjust, equally *Popish* *.

* Occasional Papers, Vol. II. No. 2.

I suppose you will farther allow, that *his People* have a *Right* to a Minister's Improvements; that they, or the Government, support him with handsome Stipend, to enable him to buy Books and obtain Leisure for Reading and Study, *for the End*, that he may, every Week, be communicating to them and their Families the Knowledge he has gain'd, for promoting their spiritual Advantage. That therefore he would *wrong them*, if he either neglect his Studies, or imprison his Light, and conceal what he believes is the Truth of God, and may be useful to Mankind.

B. I cannot deny this.

C. If then he *ought* to communicate his Light and teach his People Knowledge; and if they have a *Right* to it, founded in Reason, and in the Gospel of Christ, the only Question remaining is, *How ought to be treated for thus doing?*

B. I cannot but own, he ought to be treated *well*; for it must be *wrong* to treat any Man *ill*, when doing *right*. He ought to be *attended to*; what he says ought to be *examined*; what is clear and well proved, by sufficient Evidence, ought to be *received*; what is dubious ought to be *doubted of*, the Judgment about it suspended; and what appears false, ought to be *rejected*, by those, to whom after impartial Examination, it so appears.

C. These are my Thoughts exactly; and I am glad to have your Concurrence in a Matter which appears to me so momentous towards recovering Peace in the Church, and spreading Truth in the World.

B. Yet I am not intirely free of all Difficulties about this Matter; for suppose this Minister changes his Opinions, and also differ from the Opinions of his Fathers and Neighbours, and dissent from the Formularies which by the Vulgar, and by some

of the Learned, are considered as Standards of the *Orthodox Faith*.-----

C. Suppose the Truth of all this; can you draw any unfriendly Inference from it, after you have allowed, that he has done what he had a *Right* to do, what he *ought* to do, and what his People had a *just Claim* to from him?

As to *changing his own Sentiments*, let me ask you; Is not such a Love to Truth and Goodness, such a Probity and Sincerity of Heart, as carrieth in it a Readiness to change one's Mind and Practice upon Conviction, essential to an honest Man? Would he not be a very *dishonest Man*, if, upon Conviction that he was before in the wrong, he did not change his Mind, but still go on to profess his former Errors, and to disown what he seeth to be true? Will any upright Man act at this rate?

Without the Liberty of *changing our Opinions*, Reason would be given in vain; Study and Disputation would be useless; a Man must shut his Eyes against all further Light and Truth. Did not *St. Paul*, did not *Luther*, and all our great Reformers, change their Opinion? Did not the great *Chillingworth* do it several Times, and with great Sincerity?

As to a Man's Opinions *differing from those of his Fathers and Neighbours*; he cannot possibly help that; it is wholly out of his Power. Thus did the Opinions of *Joshua*, and of the pious *Israelites*, and their Worship, differ from those both of their Ancestors and their Neighbours, *Josh. xxiv. 14, &c.* Must a Man resist Divine Illumination, thro' Fear lest he should think a little differing from other Men? Or, should he be *ill-used* for that Honesty and Virtue which leadeth him to own and profess his Differing. Hear what your learned *Baxter* saith. "A Man cannot hold what Opinion of he would himself; much less can he believe

" what another Man commandeth him: My Un-
 " derstanding is not at my own Command; I can-
 " not be of every Man's Belief who is uppermost
 " Evidence, not Force, is the natural Means to
 " compel the Mind; as Goodness, and not Force
 " is the natural Means to win Mens Love *."

As it is *weak Superstition* to be fond of old Op-
 nions, not supported by *Evidence* of Truth; so it
 is *low Servitude* not to dare to own the Truth
 thro' the Love of this World, and the Fear of
 Men.

Is not the Reformation from *Popery* built upon
 every Man's *Right* to inquire into the Sense of his
 Bible, and his *Obligation* to profess according to his
 Sentiments? And was not the noblest Attempt
 that ever was made to rescue Mankind from the
 Bondage of Error, the Publication of the Gospel?
 Yet how extream was the Hazard of all who in-
 gaged in this Design, who durst preach a Gospel
 inconsistent with the Faith of their Fathers, and
 contrary to the Practice of all their Neighbours.
 And even at this Day, in almost all Christian So-
 cieties, a Man cannot profess his Dissent from the
 prevailing Opinions, tho' with the greatest Modesty
 and Respect, without exposing himself to a Thou-
 sand Mortifications. May I not add, " That there
 " never was any Age of the World, nor any Period
 " of Church History, in which all Attempts to in-
 " lighten Mens Minds, and reform what was ab-
 " surd or dangerous in their religious Sentiments
 " were not opposed by Torrents of *Calumny*, and
 " exclaimed against with the utmost *Rudeness* and
 " Violence: Harsh, opprobrious Names are as
 " easily, and have been as frequently bestowed on
 " Truth as Falshood." But is such Opposition just
 and will you attempt to defend it?

B. I will not appear in the Cause of Violence and Fury, against any learned, sober, and upright Men: Yet it does not appear fit for any *private* Man to oppose his Judgment to the *Publick*.

C. Suppose a Man never saw any Church Articles, Creeds, Catechisms, or Canons, but has only studied his *Bible*, and the immediate Helps to understand it; may he not become a good Christian, and a good Minister too? Suppose also, that he *has seen* these *Human Composures*, these publick Forms, and *dissents* from them in some Points, where is the *Crime* or the *Harm*? It is not his own Judgment only, much less his own Authority, that he opposeth to the Publick; but he opposeth his own *Reason*, and the *Authority of the Scriptures* to the publick Faith; that is, he opposeth the Judgment of *God* to the Judgment of *Men*; which, I hope, you will grant to be very warrantable.

As *Chillingworth* says *, Men are bound to the Judgment of the Publick, in Courts of civil Judicature; but they are not bound to *think* their Determinations lawful, and their Sentiments just. Yet, if it was as evident, that God had appointed the Pope or Church of *Rome* [the Synod of *Dort*, the *English* Convocation, the Assembly of Divines and Lawyers at *Westminster*] to be the Guide of Truth, and judge of Controversies, as that the King hath appointed such a one to be Lord Chief Justice, we might be bound to submit to such a Guide.

Besides, in civil Controversies, a Man may be Judge, who is no Party; but in Matters of Religion every Man is a Party; therefore no Man, nor any Body of Men, can be another Man's Judge, whose Sentence he is bound to obey, or whose Opinion he is bound to believe. Nor will holding my Opinion do my Adversary any wrong, any more

* *Relig. of Protest.* 4^{to}. Edit. p. 323.

than holding his will do me wrong; What need then of a Judge, where no Wrong is done?

Moreover, you must allow, that against *God* and *Truth* there lieth *no Prescription*; therefore it may be great Wisdom to forsake *ancient Errors* for *more ancient Truths*. ONE GOD is to be followed rather than innumerable Crowds of Men; therefore it may be lawful and wise for all Men, for a Part of Men, or for *one single Man*, to return to the Truth, tho' all the World beside were resolute to abide in Error.

If these Reasonings are good against the Church of *Rome*, they are equally good against all Composers of Articles of Faith for their Neighbours, who usually compose them, not in *the Words which the Holy Ghost hath taught*; but in Words of Men's Wisdom only.

If any Synods and Assemblies have a *Commission from God* to draw up Creeds and Articles for others, and to require their Assent, let them produce it: If they had and *have none*, every Man and every Minister is at full Liberty to assent to them, or dissent from them, as the several Articles appear to him proved or unproved.

B. Tho' I am not able to refute these Arguments, yet a Consequence of allowing them seems to be that, if Men submit not to the Judgment of the Publick, but are at Liberty to follow their own private Judgment, Men may be of any Religion, or none, a *Christian* or a *Jew*; they may be of any Party or Sect of Christians, and yet defend themselves by this Principle, of following their own private Judgment, against the Sense of learned and pious Synods and Councils.

C. I allow the Truth and Justice of the Consequence; and be the Case ever so bad, I know not how it can be helped, but by a Remedy a thousand times worse than the Disease. If *God* leave Men to choose

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choose their own Religion, why should not *Men* do it? Was it not better that *Man* had Understanding and Liberty, tho' the Consequence was *Sin*, than if God had made him without either? Do not you Dissenters think the Liberty of choosing your own Ministers preferable to their being imposed on you, tho' that Liberty is attended with innumerable Heats and Contentions?

If Men are obliged to submit to the Judgment of the Publick, tho' against their own private Judgment, could *Christianity* ever have made its way into the World? Or, could there have been any Reformation from *Papery*? The publick Judgment was against both. Is not Liberty for every Man to follow his Conscience, while he injureth no Man, tho' this produce Variety of Opinions and Modes of Worship, much to be preferred to Church-Tyranny, to universal Slavery, to gross Ignorance and Hypocrisy? Did *Jesus Christ* use, or appoint, any Methods besides Argument and Persuasion, to convince and convert *Jews* and *Heathens*? If *Men* use any other, if by Creeds and Articles, and enforcing these by Acts of Uniformity, Dragoons, and the Terrors of the Inquisition, they prevail with People to *profess* and *act* against Faith and Conscience; is this abominable Practice of any Service to Religion?

None have made a louder Outcry against *Imposition* in Matters of Religion than the Dissenters; yet I fear they are not wholly clear of this Crime: For if even their Guides and Teachers do not speak in their Dialect, pronounce their *Shibboleth*, adopt their Phrases, keep in their Tract of Sounds and Opinions; the ignorantly Zealous amongst them make a Run upon them as Men not fit to preach, unworthy to be heard, and as forfeiting Christian Communion and social Friendship.

The Dissenters claim the Liberty to think for themselves, and to follow their own Consciences, tho'

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tho' against the Judgment of our learned Bishops and Convocations; yet when any of their own Ministers use the same Liberty, if hereby they happen to differ from them in their Notions, they persecute their good Name with endless Rage, and can scarce treat them with Humanity. Even the Dregs of the People insist on their Ministers believing as the *Assembly of Divines* believed; tho' that is *impossible* to a Man, who already believeth them in the wrong; and to *say* he believeth as they do, while he believeth otherwise, is *double Dealing* with God and the World: And to try any Man's Faith and Opinions by a Standard, which must itself be tried by another original Standard, is as *weak* as it is *unjust*; and for Protestants, especially Protestant Dissenters to do it, is the most egregious *Self-Contradiction*.

As a First-Rate Writer observeth, " The Humour
" of Creed-making and Imposing, is one of the most
" grievous Instances of Persecution --- It is arrogant
" in Papists; worse in the C---h of E-----d; worst
" of all in the Dissenters: In them it is *Iniquity*
" and *Folly*. It being true in Fact, that Creeds,
" Confessions, and Articles, have been, in all Ages,
" the Engines of the most acknowledged and
" bloody Persecutions. And they (the Dissenters)
" have had a Share in some of them *."

As plain as this Point is, yet so sad is the Case, that if a Man believe his *Bible* ever so firmly, and endeavour to live up to it ever so sincerely, which is *all that is or can be necessary to Salvation*; yet, you know, that the Zealots amongst the Dissenters will not reckon him *Orthodox*, unless he also believe in the *Westminster Confession and Catechism*; that is, unless he sacrifice his private Judgment and Conscience to the publick one. Tho', as I suppose you

* Occas. Pap. Vol. II. No. I.

believe, that the Assembly at *Westminster* had no more Order from God, and therefore no more Right to make Articles of Faith for their Brethren, Neighbours and Children, or authoritatively to interpret Scripture for them, than the Council of *Trent*, the Synod of *Dort*, or the Convocation in *England*, or the General Assembly at *Edinburgh*, had to do it for their Brethren, Neighbours, and Children. To suppose they had, would be equally absurd, as to suppose, that Assembly had a Right to set up an Office for *making Spectacles*, and to oblige all their Neighbours and Children to read the Bible thro' their Glasses only; tho' great Numbers declared, they could see better without them; and that the Bible, in some Places, appeared more obscure and dim thro' their Glasses, than when read with naked Eyes *.

B. Tho' what you say in the general appears just; and tho' Imposition and Persecution have a very ill Face amongst Dissenters; yet I cannot but think a considerable Degree of Reverence is due to so venerable a Body as the Assembly of Divines, who met at *Westminster*.

C. The utmost Deference we owe to *publick Opinions*, whatever Assembly of Men, like ourselves, have approved them, is to give them a *due Consideration*; otherwise, if we must assent to them *without Evidence*, I must be a *Papist*, a *Protestant*, a *Mahometan*, according to the Country I am in.

If *Selden*, the Lawyer, a Member of Parliament, and one of the Assembly of Divines, took the Liberty to correct the Assembly, when sitting, and all in a Body, by appealing to the Original *Hebrew* and *Greek* †; Why may not the same Liberty be

* See *Toleration justified*, a Pamphlet wrote in 1646, in Answer to a Letter of the *London Ministers* to the Assembly of Divines at *Westminster* against Toleration.

† *Whitlock's Memoirs*, p. 68.

taken, after they are broke up and dead? A hundred Divines in their *Closets*, have as much Wisdom as the same Hundred met in *one Room*; and may as soon find out Truth by Care and *hard Study*, as by *hot Disputes*.

Yet I own, that *free Conference* and *calm Debates* amongst learned Men may tend to some Discoveries; but in this Case, it is *Proof* and *Evidence* that gains Assent; Authority is set aside. But, alas, how few Assemblies and Councils ever met upon this Errand, *free Debate*! Their Business has been, not to *form their own Notions* by God's Word and the Evidence of Truth; but to forge Creeds for *other People*, and to carry all by a Majority of Votes; in which Case, the Wise, the Learned, the Modest, are usually out-voted by the Overbearing, the Ignorant, and the Passionate. Will any wise People substitute the Writings, the Creeds, the Canons of such Assemblies, instead of the Word of the infallible God?

As Christians, as Protestants, as reasonable Beings, we go upon the great Principle of *seeing with our own Eyes*, and not with the Eyes of our Fathers, Neighbours, or Teachers; ---- of *acting upon our own Judgments*, not allowing others to judge for us in Things wherein we have a Right to judge for ourselves. What another Man *sees*, or *says* he sees, in God's Word, is only his own Judgment, and not a Revelation of God, *as to me*, while I am unable to *see it myself*.

Now, do not such *Dissenters* give up this great *fundamental Article*, who oblige their Ministers to see with the Eyes of the *Westminster Assembly*, under the dreadful Penalty of losing as much Reputation, Comfort, and Usefulness, as it is in their Power to deprive them of? Tho' that very *Assembly* used their *own Eyes*, and were not (at least should not have been) governed by what their

Popish

Popish or Protestant Ancestors and Neighbours believed *. In trying their Catechism, therefore, and all Human Composures, by God's Word, do not your Ministers act *as they did*, who tried the Doctrines of *their Fathers* by the same Word of God, as far as it was then understood. If the Scriptures are now better understood, in some Parts, thro' the Helps our Fathers have left us, and thro' the Labours of the present Generation; must Men refuse the Light, and see, at least pretend to see no more than others have done before them?

These, with what Observations I made on this Head before, will, I hope, give you full Satisfaction as to this Point.

B. I have yet one Objection to all this Reasoning, and to the Principle of *private Judgment*, which you have been endeavouring to support, which seems to me of Weight; namely, That if Men must always act according to their own Judgment, and follow the Dictates of Conscience; then, if it be a Principle with them, that Men of a differing Religion from their own, ought to be persecuted, and forced to imbrace, or to profess to imbrace their Religion, they would be justified in such Persecutions: And consequently *Jews* and *Papists*, who thought they did God Service by it, were excusable at least, in all the Barbarities they have committed against those of a different Religion from themselves. In short, upon your Principles, Persecutions raised against the *Truth* may be as just as those raised against *Error*.

C. I acknowledge the Force of the Objection. And it is possible there may be strong, and seemingly unanswerable Objections against demonstrable Truths: But this is an Objection which, I think, is capable of a good Solution. And I answer to it,

* Tho' *Millar*, with all his Zeal for the Assembly, owns they too closely followed the common System. Rescue, p. 78.

1. That it is almost impossible to suppose a Man thoroughly *sincere* in a Belief, " That Men may " be tormented, banished, put to the most cruel " Deaths for their Mistakes about Religion." A Man must have trodden under foot a Thousand Ideas of Reason, Equity, and Humanity, before he can bring himself to *believe* that a good and merciful God has injoin'd such Violences against one another; and he must have banish'd all the tender Sentiments of Justice and Piety, before he can bring himself to *practise* upon so horrid a Principle. So that it is probable, that in the most Persecutions for Religion, Men do not act upon *Judgment* and *Conscience*; but are fired by the worst of Passions, Malice, Cruelty, Pride, Covetousness, and Revenge.

2. Suppose, that thro' the Influence of a corrupt Education, and the Instigation of sanguinary Priests, any are so far gone in this dreadful Enthusiasm, as to act upon Principle in persecuting innocent Men; this Persecution is actually hindring all the Persecuted from professing and acting according to Conscience; therefore the Persecutor, tho' he should pretend Conscience, ought to be restrained, and have his Hands tied up; in regard he would, while pleading his own Conscience, hinder all the rest of the World from acting conformably to their Consciences. And if nothing but Imprisonment or Death will prevent the Fury of such Persecutors, a Regard to the *publick Good* makes such Punishment necessary, as necessary as hanging a Villain for Robbery or Murder, tho' he should plead Conscience for doing it. In which Case, the Persecutor suffers, not for his *Errors* or *Mistakes* in Religion; but as a *publick Enemy* to Mankind, and one of the most mischiveous of Malefactors.

3. The Prevalency of this noble and friendly Principle, *That all Men have a Right to use their*

own Judgment, and to follow Conscience in religious Matters; so that no Man is thereby injured, would for ever prevent all Beginnings of Persecution, and cut up the Roots of Church Tyranny throughout the World. For no Man, no good Man would attempt to injure, abuse, or molest another for his religious Sentiments and Practice, who knew his Neighbour had as good a Right as himself to his own Opinions, Faith, and Practice. All Men therefore should endeavour to propagate so just and pacifick a Principle and Maxim, so friendly to Truth and to the Rights of Mankind *.

B. Your Answer has given me some Satisfaction; and if your Principles are just, there is no Room to proceed with any farther Objections I have heard made against the Gentleman who is supposed to have drawn up the Dialogue; in regard he has done no more than what every Minister and every Man has a Right to do; namely, to profess and teach, in a fair and just Way, what he believes is Truth, for which no Man ought to *think* or *speak* ill of him.

Yet, as your Conversation is acceptable, and I think I have received some Light from it, if you will not think me over impertinent and troublesome, I would hear how you will bring off that Gentleman from the Charge of *denying several great Articles of Religion, and such as People have been taught to call* FUNDAMENTAL POINTS.

C. Seeing the meanest *Christian* Servant, Mechanick, and Ploughman, believeth all fundamental, or essential Articles, otherwise he would not be a Christian; you must be convinced, that this Charge is the Language either of strong Prejudice and Ignorance, or of Passion and Ill-will, or of Subtilty and Art.

* See Bayle's Philof. Commentary. Locke's Letters of Toleration.

Do not the *Papists* thus defend their Rage against the Protestants, by first branding them as *Hereticks*; that is, as denying Fundamentals? Did not the *Jews* on the same Bottom defend their Rage against *Jesus Christ*, *St. Stephen*, and *St. Paul* *?

Was the Charge ever so *true*, this will not justify Wrath and Railing; for the Son of God would not have his Doctrine defended at the Expence of his *Laws*. But most certainly it is a *false*, and I fear, in some Mouths a *lying* Accusation: For do not you think that Gentleman believeth that *Jesus Christ* is the true *Messiah*, sent from God to teach and save the World? And was not this the only fundamental Article of Christian Belief, during the Time of Christ, and a good while after? Doth he not believe the twelve Articles in the *Apostles Creed*? And what Christian dare say, that it does not contain all the Fundamentals of Christian Faith? ---- Doth he not believe all the Christian Doctrines which all good Christians in *all Places*, and thro' *all Ages* have agreed in, and never disputed? And is not this a sure Rule by which to know Fundamentals? ----- Once more, Do you not think that Gentleman *believeth* the *BIBLE* to be God's Revealed Word, indeavoureth to *understand* it, and to *live* according to it? And can more than this be fundamental or necessary to Salvation?

B. I cannot deny these Things, without a great Breach of Charity, or discovering a very weak Understanding.

C. Then, must not his Accusers be *false Accusers* †, from whom every honest Man will *turn away*?

* *John* x. 31. *Chap.* xi. 8. *Acts* vi. 11, 22. *Chap.* vii. 57. *Chap.* xiv. 5, 19, &c.

† *St. Paul's* Word is *Devils*, *διαβολας*. And he speaks of Devils, false Accusers of the Brethren, not only in the World, but in the Church, and in the Pulpit too. *2 Tim.* iii. 5, 10, 13. *Titus* ii. 3.

But to retort a little; are there not fundamental LAWS and DUTIES, as well as fundamental *Articles of Faith*? Are not these two of that Number, That we do unto others, as we should think it fit they should do unto us; and that we love one another?" Do not all false accusing Zealots deny the Truth of, and either ignorantly or maliciously break these fundamental Laws of Justice and Love? And is there not as much *more Guilt* in this, than in denying what they weakly call fundamental Truths, as *voluntary Sin* is worse than *involuntary Mistakes*; or worse than imbracing what Man sincerely believeth is Truth?

Now, as *Peace* is bought too dear, when purchased with the Loss of *Truth*, useful Truth; so *Truth*, in its Turn, and much more *Error*, will be bought too dear, when purchased at the Expence of *Justice, Love, Peace*, and almost all practical Religion. For *Truth* then becomes useless, when it hath no Influence to promote Holiness, a Christian Temper, and a good Life.

To add no more; suppose you, my Friend, saw some of your Neighbours wandering, as you thought, *in the Dark, or out of the Way*, and you charitably held out a Light, and in a friendly Manner directed them right; and instead of either thankfully accepting, or civilly refusing your Help, they should give you foul Language, cry out to have you put down, or knock'd o' the Head, would you think yourself well used?

B. No truly, very ill used.

C. Why, this is the whole of that Gentleman's Crime, as far as I understand it; yet by some of his Neighbours he has been very ill treated for it.

B. I must own, that I have been Witness of a good deal of Wrath and Clamour against him and his Notions amongst the Vulgar; and have heard, that some of the Ministers declaim against his Principles

Principles in the Pulpit, and reflect on him severely in private; whom I cannot but think worthy Men, and it seems strange to me, that all these should be in the wrong, and he in the right.

C. Have any of these Ministers you refer to proposed and entred into free Conversation with him, and offered personally to debate the Points where they differ, before they attack him in the Pulpit?

B. I have not heard much of that.

C. Is it, think you, ingenuous to declaim in the Pulpit (which you know is a privileged Place) against a Man whom they do not think fit to engage in private? Is it like a Christian or a Brother, to do a Man ill Offices, only for publishing what he believes is Truth, and attempting in a rational Way to rectify prevailing Error?

But in all Ages, and in all Churches, the non-thinking and non-reading Clergy have been Enemies to Men of Thought and Inquiry; and are very angry to have it thought that others know more than themselves. As there are in our own Church so it is very likely, that amongst the Dissenters there are to be found Men of mean Spirits, of obscure Original, and of narrow Principles, who cannot bear the Light which floweth from Ingenuity, Freedom, Examination, and honest Industry. If the Ministers you speak of are *worthy Men*, they have certainly acted an *unworthy Part*, and what I hope they are ashamed of.

As to their being a *Majority*, if it be Fact, I hope you do not lay much Stress on that; for *Truth* has oftner been out-voted than *Error*; nor should it seem a strange Proposition to a *Protestant*, "That a *Minority* may be in the right, and a *Majority* in the wrong;" seeing as a *Protestant*, nay as a *Christian*, he is a *Protester* against a *Majority* in the wrong.

But

But pray by what Rule and Test do these Ministers pretend to try, judge, and condemn that Gentleman's Opinions?

B. Tho' they profess the *Bible* to be a sufficient Rule of Faith and Life; yet they frequently attack his Notions with the Confession and Catechisms of the Assembly of Divines, and with the Articles of the Church of *England*.

C. We have had pretty well of this before; yet let me ask, Do not they, give up the *Sufficiency* of the Holy Scriptures, who offer to try Mens Opinions by any other Standard? One of your Writers of great Fame says, "Stick close to this *one Bible*, and let nothing come into your Faith and Religion, but what cometh thence; and when Controversies arise, try them by this; and if you cannot do it yourselves, take the Help of Ministers and Synods; and use them not as *Masters*, but as *Helpers* of your Faith; not to make you *another Rule*, but to help you to understand *this only Rule* *."

Now,

* *Baxter's Works*, Vol. IV. p. 674.

Even *Millar* can say, "What is merely Human, ought to have no Place at all in Catechisms, Articles, Confessions of Faith, &c."

Preface to his *Rescue*.

And a much greater and better Writer than he says, "This presumptuous imposing the Senses of Men upon the Words of God; the special Senses of Men, upon the general Words of God, and laying them upon Mens Consciences together, under the equal Penalty of Death and Damnation; this very Conceit that we can speak of the Things of God, better than in the *Words of God*; this Deifying our own Interpretations, and tyrannous inforcing them upon others; this restraining the *Words of God* from that Latitude and Generality, and the *Understandings of Men* from that Liberty wherein Christ and his Apostles left them, is, and hath been the only Fountain of all the Schisms of the Church; and that which makes them immortal; the common Incendiary of Christendom, and that which tears in Pieces not the Coat, but the Bowels and Members of Christ.

"Take away these Walls of Separation, and all will be quickly one: Take away this *Persecuting, Burning, Cursing, Damning* of Men, for not subscribing to the *Words of Men*, as the Words of God; require of Christians only to believe Christ, and to call no Man Master but him only; let those leave claiming Infallibility, who have no Title to it; and

Now, if any tell me, I must *judge for myself*, and *use my Bible* to try all Opinions in Religion; but when I have done so, must not *profess* or *teach* any thing different from the common Opinions of my Neighbours and Fathers; Is not this an Insult upon Protestant Principles, a Banter upon Man's Understanding, and the highest Disgrace to the Bible? As this is the *Spirit of Popery*, would it not look more honest to keep her *Language*, and openly declare against all Examination of prevailing and established Opinions and Customs, by the Word of God?

Can the *Protestant Religion* be said to be established, till this Principle and Temper be established? "That Protestants be ready to allow to others the Liberty, which, as Protestants, they claim themselves; without being angry at others for differing from them?" For, has the Protestant Religion any other Foundation than impartial Liberty in searching the Scriptures, and professing the Truths we find there? And must a Man be abused for only acting up to this great Protestant Principle; as we understand Mr. ----- has been. Nay, I have heard, that some of the Ministers, instead of rightly informing their People, and trying to cure their wild and fiery Tempers, rather countenance them in ill Opinions of that Gentleman, in putting on him odious Names, and in an Aversion to his Ministry. Is there any Truth in these Reports?

"and let them who in *Words* disclaim it, disclaim it likewise in their *Actions*; in a Word, take away Tyranny, which is the Devil's Engine to support Errors, Superstitions, and Impieties, in the several Parts of the World, (which otherwise could not long withstand the Power of Truth) I say, take away Tyranny, and restore Christians to their just and full Liberty of captivating their Understandings to Scripture only; and, as Rivers, when they have a free Passage, run all to the Ocean; so it may well be hoped, by God's Blessing, that universal Liberty, thus moderated, may quickly reduce Christians to Truth and Unity. These Thoughts of Peace, I am persuaded, may come from the God of Peace; and to his Blessing I commend them."

B. I cannot wholly disown them, and apprehend there may be some Foundation for them; nay, I own myself to have been too much influenced by my Reverence for Men whom I valued and esteem'd as good Ministers. But I hope we are all coming into a better Temper.

C. It is high time you should, for very unhappy is the Lot of dissenting Ministers; since, as your own Mr. Bennet observes *, if a Man be *upright* and *inquisitive*, he is sure to be a *Heretick*; and will be treated with that Bitterness and Rage which is judged their proper Portion; while, at the same time, the most ignorant and empty, the most crafty and designing, the most passionate and fiery, are covered with Eulogies, if they have but the good Luck to be dubb'd Orthodox. No wonder then, if the strongest Heads and the warmest Hearts are discouraged from entering the Ministry amongst a Number of unthinking Bigots †. This, if these Discouragements go on, must issue in the Decay and Ruin of the Dissenting Interest. For a Man need only be *stupid* enough not to read or think for himself; *Mean* enough and *Cunning* enough to

* *Bennet's Irenicum.*

† By a *Bigot*, I mean a Man fond of his own Sentiments; and who stands up for a Set of Opinions with more Conceit and Eagerness, than the Reason or Importance of them do require. — *Partiality* and *Violence* are a Part of his Picture; and a *Zeal* carrying him out to *Uncharitableness* towards all other Men; and which stands opposed to a *generous Freedom* and *Largeness* of Soul. — Some are Bigots by *Constitution*, being unhappy in a certain Littleness of Mind and Narrowness of Heart: Others are Bigots thro' a natural *Furiosness*: Others from *Education*: Others from *Pride* and *Selfishness*: Others are Bigots thro' *conversing* with only one Set of Men, and Books on one Side. — So that all Bigots are not equally criminal, nor to be treated with equal Severity.

Yet *Bigotry* of every Species, hath something in it *unmanly*, as it is a following others in the dark; — *ungentle*, as it makes a Man positive, and often rude; *unchristian*, for the Gospel alloweth us to try every thing, and requireth us to love our Brother; — *unphilosophical*, as an Enemy to Truth and Light; — and *impolitick*, as an Enemy to publick Peace. For a *Bigot* will damn a Man for a *Heretick*, who yet believeth and reverenceth his Bible, and taketh all the Pains he can to understand it.

See Occas. Pap. Vol. I. No. 1.

fawn and flatter, to sooth the worst Passions, spirit up the ill Tempers, and connive at the Vices of the worser Part of his Auditors; and he is sure to be *Orthodox*. Thus, in all Instances, *Orthodoxy covereth a Multitude of Sins*.

An ignorant, unbred, and passionate Mob are easily spirited up to Fury and Violence, against the best of their Neighbours, by Priests, for whom they have a blind Veneration; as in the Case of the late Dr. *Sach-----*. Call but a Man a *Heretick*, and in many Places you'll find a Protestant Mob ready to treat him as Papists do a *Heretick* convict; they'll tear in Pieces his good Name, run him down with Noise, Slander, and Scandal; will shew him no Pity in his Calamity; if any Afflictions befall him, such is their Charity and good Nature, they will call it a Judgment from God, *Prov. xvii. 5*. This terrible, this cruel, this unrelenting Spirit, whether found in *Spain* and *Portugal*, in *North* or *South Britain*, is as unlike the Spirit of God, of Christ, and of the Gospel, as Darkness is to Light, or Heaven to Hell. As the great Dr. *Barrow* says, " *Goodness* sits gloriously triumphant at the Top of Heaven; *Uncharitableness* lies miserably grovelling under the Bottom of Hell *."

As another considerable Writer says, I am sorry that this gross *Heresy* of *Persecution* has still so many Votaries, and where I least suspected it. That those harmless Lambs †, who, to my Remembrance, have been bleating against *Persecution* these thirty Years, should now bite and devour one another; Who would have thought it!

But when MINSTERS so far forget themselves, their Principles, and their Interest, as to practise these Methods against their Brethren, it is amazing indeed. Has not the Gentleman we speak of a

* Vol. I. Sermon. 31.

† The Protestant Dissenters. Occas. Pap. Vol. III. Pref. wrote 1718.

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Right to act as he has done, as a reasonable Being, as a Christian, as a Minister of the Truth of Jesus Christ, as a Protestant; I may add, as a Dissenter: Has he not a Right, founded in all these Characters, to understand and explain the Bible as he is able? And shall any of his Brethren *use him ill*, solely on this Account, for doing his Duty, for doing what themselves are doing, or should be doing, every Lord's Day; How shall we bring them off *!

Do

* Thus the famous *Castellio* was dealt with, thro' the Persecutions of that both good and great Man *Calvin*, and other of his Protestant Enemies; so that he was forced (with all his Learning) to work for his Bread; and died poor, if not in want. See his Article in *Bayle*.

Thus were great Numbers of Christian, Protestant Ministers, Men eminently learned, pious and useful, treated by their hot *Calvinistical* Brethren in *Holland*; and particularly thro' the Influence of the persecuting Synod at *Dort*. *Brant's Hist. of the Refor.*

Bigots and *Zealots* in all Churches are so near a-kin, and so much alike, that it may help to open some Peoples Eyes, to set before them a few Instances of that Similitude.

Popish Bigots deny the Laity the Use of the Bible, unless they obtain a special License: *Protestant, Dissenting* Bigots allow the Bible to be read, but with virulent Tongues, and spiteful Suggestion, persecute their own Brethren, only for making a free and honest Use of it.

Papists call a Man a *Heretick*, only for expounding Scripture contrary to the Sense of their learned Doctors, Councils, and Fathers: Some *fiery Teachers* amongst the *Dissenters* represent a Man as an *Arian, Arminian, Apostate, Heathen*, that is, at best, as a *Heretick*, for the same Crime; namely, expounding God's Word differing from the good Fathers at *Westminster*, as if the Holy Ghost had sat upon each of them, and on them only.

Popish Zealots invent a thousand Stories to abuse Protestants*, * *Sir Edwin Sandys's State of Religion.* whom they have adjudged *Hereticks*: *Dissenting Zealots* do the same against Ministers by them judged *Heterodox*. They work up little Stories into great Matters, put on new Colours, misrepresent Circumstances, pervert Intentions, aggravate Facts, conceal and suppress material Incidents, — in order to blacken innocent Mens Fame.

Popish Priests countenance the People in, and excite them to Rage and Fury, and all manner of unrighteous Language against all Heretical Protestants: Are there no *Dissenting Priests*, who have a little conformed to them? Hot-headed Teachers of all Parties inspire the meanest and passionate Part of their People with their own Rage.

Popish Priests connive at Immoralities in a good Catholic; but will scarce acknowledge any Virtues in a Protestant: Protestants, even *Dissenting Zealots*, can easily forgive Crimes in an Orthodox Brother; His Orthodoxy (which perhaps is only his Ignorance, Bigotry, Confidence, Zeal for Words and Sounds) will atone for Lying, Pride, and Flattery, for Drunkenness,

Do *Dissenting Ministers*, who once made so glorious a Stand for *Liberty* and a *Bible Religion*, thus ingloriously give up their own Principles, thus shamefully desert the Protestant Standard; Who could have thought it!

Had not a Man better be hamstring'd by an *Oath of Canonical Obedience*, and thereby be subjected to one wise, learned, moderate, charitable Bishop; than hamper'd with a Set of Bigots; who, with too little of either Learning, Charity, or Honesty, set up for Arbiters of *Orthodoxy*?

I would let such Gentlemen know that the *true Orthodox Way* of curing Mistakes and Errors, if they apprehend any of their Brethren guilty, is by Evidence and Reason; the *Heretical Way* is by Force and Violence, Inhumanity and ill Manners; for, as an eminent Writer says, there cannot be a worse *Heresy* than *Persecution*.

What signifies their abusing the Pope, declaiming against Cardinals and the Hierarchy, throwing down Images, laughing at Church Fopperies, and detesting Transubstantiation; while Bigotry, Uncharitableness, and unchristian Angers possess their Hearts! What signifies having the *Gospel*, the *Church*, and *Grace* in their Mouths, if Humanity is banish'd from their Lives! What signifies their hating the Whore, and praying God to burn her

Drunkennes, Fury, and Injustice; but they will scarce admit of any good Qualities in an *unsound* Man, as they call him. No Learning, Integrity, Industry, Candour, not the most shining Virtues will protect him from their rude and insolent Tongues. Thus, in their religious Fury, they wound the soundest Members of their own Body.

Once more; *Popish Inquisitors* have their *Familiars*, People employ'd as Spies, to watch the Behaviour of the Suspected, to pick up and carry Stories to their Principals, by whose Factors the most innocent are accused, and often ruined: Have not some *Dissenting Teachers* their Tools, passionate Men, and zealous Women, who are employ'd in the same dirty Jobs, as Spies, Story-Carriers, Letter-Minters, &c. to run down the Reputation of their best Ministers, by a Torrent of Defamation!

Is it not high Time for Protestants, of all Denominations, utterly to banish from them this dreadful *Popish Spirit*?

Flesh

Flesh with Fire, while they burn with *Babylon's* Rage one against another, and hate their own Flesh!

Is there indeed so much Popery, so much of the worst Part of Popery, in Dissenting Meeting-Houses, and in Dissenting Teachers! Will no Histories of past Ages, no Sufferings of their Fathers, no Experience of their own, no Arguments open the Eyes of the Guides of the People! Can they any longer proceed in complaining of Popish or Church Persecutions, while they go on treating ill their Fellow-Christians, Fellow-Protestants, Fellow-Dissenters, Fellow-Ministers, only for the Crime (perhaps the Virtue) of thinking in disputed Points differing from themselves!

B. I thank you, Sir, for the Pains you have taken to set me right on the Head of Liberty and Persecution: I begin to be sensible, that to mislead, abuse, and injure any Man, much more a Minister of unstained Reputation, only for his *Opinions*, which he cannot help; and for teaching People what he believes is *Truth*, while he doth it, as becometh a Christian Minister, only by Argument and Persuasion, is very inhuman and unchristian, and cannot be justified: ---- That for *Protestants* to do it one against another, is giving up the Principles of the Reformation; ---- That in *Dissenters* it is still an aggravated Crime, who have so long and so oft remonstrated against all Sorts of Persecution; ---- but that it is most of all absurd in *Dissenting Teachers*; who thereby sap the Ground they stand upon, and hurt their Body and their Cause thro' the Sides of one of their Brethren.

Yet I apprehend the Person we have in our Eye has not suffer'd much by all the Attempts made against him.

C. That is not owing to the Kindness and Humanity exercised to a Brother and a Stranger; but
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to the Wisdom and Justice of the Government which has not trusted Ecclesiasticks with Power proportionable to their Zeal and Anger. ----- It may also be owing in Part to the Consciousness of his own Integrity, his Love to Truth, and a Fortitude of Heart, springing from Innocence; which has bore him up under a Load of Calumny, and a long Scene of hard Usage. ---- It is also owing to a Body of sensible, honourable, and generous LAY-MEN, who have resolved to stand by and support their own Minister in acting so glorious a Part, as attacking Bigotry and Error, a Party and a persecuting Spirit; and in propagating pure, original Christianity, a Bible Religion, a rational Gospel Worship; tho' against a strong and violent Opposition. ---- And indeed a Set of such Gentlemen and Tradesmen, who have escaped from the Shackles of Bigotry and a narrow Spirit, who are *Christians, Protestants, Dissenters*, upon true and known Principles; these, under a gracious God, are the CHIEF RESORT of the Dissenting Ministers, whose Dependence is so much upon the good Opinion and Good-will of their People.

And I am such a Friend to Truth, to Christianity, to the Reformation, to Liberty, Moderation and Charity; that I shall be glad to see and hear that there is a competent Number of such Dissenting Lay-men, who have open'd their Eyes, and got a Victory over their Prejudices, notwithstanding all the Efforts of some narrow-spirited and passionate Preachers to keep them in the Dark, and to make them contented to feed on endless Nonsense and scholastick Notions, instead of Gospel Truths and rational Divinity.

B. You have, I think, sufficiently vindicated that Gentleman's Cause in *Point of RIGHT*, and consequently the Cause of all Christian Teachers, who apply

apply themselves to the Study of the Scriptures, and make them, and them only, the Standard of all they preach to Souls.

Whether you will be so well able to defend him on the *Head of PRUDENCE*, I question. Was it advisedly done to disturb the Peace of the Church, raise disputes, create Divisions, and set Christians one against another, by new Expositions of several Texts of Scripture, and by opposing Opinions generally prevailing?

C. This stale Objection has been made against all Preachers of Truth and Reformation, since the Devil introduced Error and Sin into the World. It lay very strong against the first Preachers of the Gospel.

Thus the SON OF GOD disturb'd the Peace of the *Jewish* Church; and raised such Disputes, that Fathers and Sons, Mothers and Daughters became irreconcilable Enemies to one another. Tho' this was foreseen, *Micah* vii. 6. yet it did not prevent the Son of God's Appearing and Preaching. And tho' our Lord foretold to his Apostles these Consequences of Preaching the Gospel, *Mat.* x. 21, 35, 36. *Luke* xii. 53. Chap. xxi. 16. yet it does not hinder his sending them forth, or induce him to alter the Tenor of their Doctrine; knowing that Truth had no natural Tendency to do Mischief in the World.----- Thus *St. Paul* and other Apostles are charged with turning the World upside-down, by their new Doctrines, *Acts* xvii. 6.---- *St. Stephen* is accused of blasphemous Preaching against the Church, the Traditions and Catechisms of their *Rabbi*, *Acts* vi. 12, 14.----- Thus *Luther* disturb'd the Peace of the Church, and created fierce and endless Debates.----- Thus did your *Baxter* disturb the Peace of the Church, and kindled as many Disputes as any Man in *England*.----- Thus have

Dr.

Dr. Clarke, Mr. Pierce, Bishop Burnet, and Bishop Hoadly, disturb'd the Peace of the Church *.

But did JESUS CHRIST, St. Paul, Luther, Baxter, Clarke, &c. really disturb the Church's Peace, by a wise, calm, rational publishing Truth, great and useful Truths to the World? Or, those factious Zealots, those furious Priests, with the deluded and inflamed Vulgar, who could not hear them with Patience; who were so wedded to the Traditions of their Fathers, the Creeds and Catechisms of Human Councils, that the sincere Word of God could not be heard; they being resolved to grow no wiser than those who went before them. Thus the Men who cry, *Peace, Peace*, are themselves the only Biters and War-Raisers, *Micah iii. 5*. They would have a Peace in the Church, at the Expence of Truth, Goodness, Honesty, Sincerity. --- Was *Elizah* really the Troubler of *Israel*? Was it St. Paul who raised the great Stir at *Ephesus*, by a free and bold Preaching the Gospel of Christ? Or, was it not, in both these Instances, the blind Zealots for the old Religion?

B. Might it not have been prudent to have deferred these Matters to a more proper Time, and till People were better able to bear them?

C. When is the most proper Time for communicating Light, but when God dispenseth it; when People have been long in Error; and when Civil Powers restrain the Wrath of Men from Mischief? Must the Truths of God never be preached till the Peace of the World will not be disturbed by them? Must Ministers wait till Mens Passions are all calm'd, and their bad Natures all mended? How

* *Melancthon*, in his Letter to *Camerarius*, writes, " You know, " have always been fearful what might break out one Time or other " Good God! what Tragedies will this Question concerning the Trinity " excite in future Ages! "

Melanct. Epist. L. 4. Ep. 140

long might *Christ*, *St. Paul*, *Luther*, *Baxter*, *Clarke*, *Pierce*, &c. have waited for that *proper Time*, when their Doctrine would raise no Disturbances in the World! Must the Moon cease to shine, because silly Curs bark at her?

B. But Men are so attached to the *Assembly's Catechism*, that I can scarce think it Wisdom to find Fault with it, and publickly to make Objections against it.

C. When the Dissenters begin to idolize their *Catechism*, as our Church Zealots do the *Co-----n Pr-----r*, is it not a Part of Wisdom, Justice, and Charity, to take them off their blind Devotion, by shewing, that neither of them are free from considerable Imperfections and Errors?

The Protestant Confession of *Ausburg*, more famous than the *Assembly's Catechism*, was revised and corrected *Ten Times* in the Space of thirty Years, as Light grew, and the Knowledge of the Scriptures advanced: How comes it then, that the *Catechism of Westminster* is, all on a sudden, grown so sacred, like the *Ark of God*, that it must not be look'd into, or touch'd, tho' with ever so gentle a Hand.

If the Dissenters are so far gone off from the just Principle of Christianity and the Reformation, as to make *Human Composures* the Rule and Object of their Faith, and to think them above Revising, Correction, and Amendment; is it not a kind and friendly Office, in any of their Body to attempt to bring them back to their *first Principles*; and to lead them to CHRIST, as the sole Master of their Faith; and not to any Assembly of fallible Men, whether at *Trent*, *Dort*, *Westminster*, or *Edinburgh*? To oblige Men to believe, or to profess to believe, as the *Westminster Assembly* believed, is claiming such a *Dominion over Mens Faith*, as *St. Paul*, the
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greatest of the Apostles, utterly disclaimed. 2 Cor.
1. 24 *.

B. Are not Errors in Judgment as bad or worse than Errors in Life? And is not that Catechism, drawn up, or approved, by so venerable an Assembly, a good Preservative from such Errors?

* He who requires that his Interpretations of any Law should be obey'd as true and genuine, seem they to Mens Understandings ever so dissonant from it, requires indeed, that his *Interpretations* be *Laws*.

And—if I should pretend to believe the Bible, but should understand it according to the Sense which the *Chief Mufti* should put upon it; who would not say, that I was a *Christian* in Pretence only, but in Deed a *Mahometan*?

Chillingw. Relig. of Protest.

There are *Errors* which are *no Sins*,—those which are not voluntary in themselves, or in their antecedent Causes; which are unavoidable thro' natural Necessity, are no Sins.

Baxt. Ch. Hist. p. 28.

Grant this one Principle, *That all Things necessary to Salvation are evidently contained in Scripture*; and it will presently follow, that (in the Disputes of Protestants) good Men and Lovers of Truth of all Sides may be saved.—There being no more certain Sign, that a Point is not evident, than that honest, understanding, and indifferent Men, and such as give themselves Liberty of Judgment, after a mature Consideration of the Matter, differ about it.—Let all Men believe the Scripture, and that only, and endeavour to believe it in the true Sense, and require no more of others; and they shall find this not only a better Means, (than Human Authority) but the *ONLY MEANS* to suppress *Heresy*, and restore *Unity*. For he who believeth the Scripture sincerely, and endeavours to believe it in the true Sense, cannot possibly be a *Heretick*. And if no more than this were required of any Man, to make him capable of Church-Communion, then all Men so qualified, tho' different in Opinion, yet notwithstanding any such Difference, must be of Necessity one in Communion.

If I be desirous to know the Truth, and diligent in searching it, and advise not at all with Flesh and Blood about the Choice of my Opinions, but only with God, and that Reason he hath given me; if I be thus qualified, and yet thro' Human Infirmary fall into Error, that Error cannot be damnable.—For, it is not fundamental, nor required of Almighty God, to believe the true Sense of Scripture in all Places; but only, that we should endeavour so to do, whensoever it shall be sufficiently propounded to us.

Chillingw. Relig. of Protest. 4to. p. 21, 28, 191, 193.

It is unreasonable to think, that he who reads the Scripture, and uses all Means appointed for that Purpose, with an earnest Desire, and with no other End, but to find the Will of God and obey it; if he mistake the Meaning of some doubtful Places, and fall unwillingly into some Errors, into which no Vice or Passion betrays him, and is willing to hear Reason from any Man, who will undertake to shew him his Error; I say, it is unreasonable to think, that a God of Goodness will impute such an Error to such a Man.

Ibid. Add. p. 96.

C.

C. What Veneration is due to Synods and Assemblies met to draw up Articles and Creeds for others, has been sufficiently considered already.

If *Errors in Judgment* are so dangerous, let the Zealots of all Parties look to themselves, who often err, I fear, both ways, by wrong Heads, and irregular Lives. For to whom is it most likely, that a gracious God will soonest reveal his Truth; to a meek and upright Inquirer, to a Lover of Truth, and a diligent Searcher after it; or to Men whose Breasts are ruffled with Passion, and shut up with Narrowness and Prejudice? *John vii. 17. If any Man do his Will, he shall know of the Doctrine, whether it be of God, or I speak of myself.*

However, as *Chillingworth* says, It is not credible ---- that a God of Goodness should damn to eternal Torments those who love him, and who love Truth, for Errors which they fall into thro' Human Frailty.

If you mean *wilful Errors*; these arise from an *unsound Heart*, are usually attended with a *bad Life*; and are dangerous enough, if it be dangerous to love Darkness, to hate Light and Truth, to cherish unchristian Tempers, and go on in ill Practices. When therefore you have proved any Man guilty of *Error*, and that Error to be *wilful*, think of him as he deserveth.

If by *Errors*, you mean *involuntary Mistakes*, which a Man seeth not, and which he would not retain if he saw them; there may be *Unhappiness* in this; but there can be no *Crime*. In which Case a Man is to be *pittied* for the Weakness of his Head, and helped out of his Mistakes by a charitable Hand; but ought not to be *abused*, and rendered more miserable, because already unhappy.

Now to call *involuntary Errors of Judgment* in upright Men, as bad as *Errors in Practice*, is to

confound *Misery* with *Guilt*, to put *Darkness* for *Light*, and *Light* for *Darkness*, *Evil* for *Good*, and *Good* for *Evil*, and a just *Woe* lieth against all who do it. *I/a. v. 20.* So dangerous a Maxim is only fitted to distress and discourage *good Men*, who may be in *Error*, notwithstanding all *Care* to avoid it; and to incourage *bad Men*, who will take Sanctuary under pretended *Orthodoxy*, while they go on in a Course of *Iniquity*. This is certainly *slaying* the Souls, which should not die; and *saving* alive the Souls, which should not live, by preaching to them *Lies*; *making the Hearts of the Righteous sad, and strengthening the Hands of the Wicked.* *Ezek. xiii. 18---23.*

It is high time for Christians and Protestants to abolish so absurd and dangerous a Maxim.

B. Tho' I cannot but allow the Justice of your Distinction between *Voluntary* and *Involuntary* Errors; yet let me ask you, Do you think there are no such Things as *Damnable Errors*?

C. Yes, I grant there are. When Men of *corrupt Minds*, of *lewd* and *wicked Lives*, invent and bring in Doctrines, which they know to be false, in order to countenance their unchristian Passions, and to compass their worldly Views, *2 Pet. ii. 1---3.* who, with their Mouth, cry, *Lord, Lord*; but in Deeds and Life *deny the Lord who bought them*; these are guilty of damnable Errors.

That "no Faith is to be kept with Hereticks," is a damnable *Popish* Error, invented by knavish Priests.

That "no Charity is to be exercised towards, and no Communion kept up with good Men, whom they, in their blind Zeal, have once nicknamed *Arians*, *Arminians*, *Unsound*, *Heterodox*," is a damnable Error, tho' propagated by some who

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call themselves Protestants, in direct Opposition to the *Communion of Saints* *.

But can a Man who *confesseth* that *Jesus Christ is come in the Flesh*, that he is the Son of God, and Saviour of the World; who *loveth* him in Sincerity; who striveth to *do* whatsoever he hath commanded; Can such a Man, with these three grand, fundamental Characters, be yet in dangerous and damnable Errors? ----- Can a Man who acknowledgeth the Divine Authority of the *New Testament*, who studieth it, prayeth to God that he may understand it, and who frameth his Life by it, yet be in damnable Error †?

If

* See a Sermon intituled, *The true Way of Striving for the Faith of the Gospel*, p. 11— by S. Bourn.

By *Heresy*, I do not mean barely a false Opinion in our Religion, whether it be of a greater or lesser Moment; for I doubt not, the same Error may be an *innocent Mistake* in one Man; and a *damnable Heresy* in another: In the one it may be the Effect of a weak Understanding; but in the other, of a perverse and obstinate Will; when the Understanding misleads the Will, it is Weakness; when the Will misleads the Understanding, it is Wickedness.

Dr. Scot, Vol. II. p. 482. *Folio*:

Heresy is nothing else but *wilful Error*.

Hale's Tracts, p. 63.

No Man can be an *Heretick*, but he who holds a *Heresy*; and an *Heresy* is a *voluntary Error*.

Chillingw. 4to. Edit. p. 359.

When a Man, out of a bad Disposition of Mind, and on ill Designs, chooses to be of a Party, he is then a *Heretick*: But he, who in Sincerity of Heart goes into Persuasions, from an overcoming Sense of their Truth, cannot be one.

Burnet's four Discourses to the Clergy, p. 190.

† *Baxter* says, no Error is effectively damning, which turneth not away the Heart from the Love of God, Heaven, and Holiness, to the prevailing Love of sinful Pleasures, Riches, or Honours. — No Error is damning, which a Man doth sincerely desire to be delivered from; and when he who hath it, doth faithfully endeavour to come to the Knowledge of the Truth, in the Use of such Means as God hath vouchsafed him. He who searcheth the Scripture, with a Love to Truth; and sincerely prayeth for God's Illumination; and sincerely practiseth what he already knoweth; and is willing to hear what any Man can say for his farther Information; God will hide nothing necessary to his Salvation from such a Man.

Hist. of Councils, p. 29.

Our great Danger, says he, in England, is of *Popery*, above all Things next to *Impiety*. LET US BUT OWN AS THE RULE OF OUR RELIGION THE HOLY SCRIPTURES, AND EXPRESS OUR BELIEF IN SCRIPTURE PHRASE, and then we can easily tell a *Papist* where our Religion

If so, what will become of those Antichristian Zealots, who neither *think* right, nor *live* well!

Religion or Church were before Luther. — Let us never depart from the Sufficiency of the Scripture, since it is the principal Point wherein a *Protestant* differs from a *Papist*; and take heed of denying the Perfection thereof *in Deed*, while we maintain it *in Words*. — By Confessions and Creeds the Mischief of *Heresy* is not so much avoided, as the Mischief of *Division* caused.

Church Concord, p. 13, 14.

The same Author elsewhere has a Passage which deserveth the Attention of all good Men. “When we have disputed and contended ourselves a-weary, and wrangled the Church into Flames and Ashes; yet that which God hath spoken *obscurely*, and so left difficult in itself, will remain difficult still; and that which is difficult thro’ the Weakness and Incapacity of unlearned Men, will be far better cleared by a *rational Explication*, than by a bare Canon.

O! when will the Lord persuade his Churches to take his *written Word* for the *only Canon* of their Faith; and that without the Determinations and Canons of Men! When will the Lord persuade us not to be wise above what is written; but to acknowledge that which is *unrevealed* in the Word to be *beyond us*; and that which is more *darkly revealed*, to be more doubtful to us!

Two Things have set the Church on Fire, and been the Plague of it above a thousand Years. 1. Inlarging our Creeds, and making more Fundamentals than God ever made. 2. Composing and Imposing our Creeds and Confessions in our own Words and Phrases.

When Men have learned more Manners and Humility, than to accuse God’s Language, as too *general* and *obscure*; as if they could mend it; and have learned more Dread of God, and Compassion on themselves, than to make those to be *Fundamentals* or *Certainties*, which God never made so; and when they have learned to reduce their Confessions to their *due Extent*, and to *Scripture Phrases*; then, and never till then, shall the Church have *Peace* about Doctrinals.

Saints Rest, Part II. Pref.

Object. The Scriptures, the Creed, &c. will be subscribed by a *Papist*, a *Socinian*, &c. *Ans.* So much the better, and the fitter are these to be a Means of Concord. Those who are afraid of Communion with *Papists*, *Socinians*, &c. must not avoid it, by making a new Rule or Test of Faith, which Men will not subscribe, or by forcing others to subscribe more than they can; but by calling them to an Account, whenever they contradict or abuse the Truth, which they have subscribed. — The *ancient Simplicity* must recover us to the ancient *Charity* and *Unity*, &c.

Object. What is the Phrase of Scripture without the right Sense; Men may subscribe Scripture, and yet misinterpret it. *Ans.* So they may do by Human Canons and Confessions. But,

1. Is there not Truth enough in all the Bible in intelligible Words, necessary to Salvation and Church Communion? Is Scripture as insufficient as *Papists* make it, without their supplemental Traditions or Decrees?

And

B. I begin to be satisfied on this Head; that only wilful Error, or the Errors of the Will can be dangerous and damning; seeing a Man can but understand according to the Capacity God giveth him; and can believe only in Proportion to the Evidence laid before him. I will try your Patience no longer, except in reminding you of that Objection to the Gentleman, whose Cause you have been espousing, "That his Opinions are new, and his Exposition of several Texts of Scripture such as the People never heard of before."

C. Did not the same Objection lie against St. Paul and his Brethren, "that they were Bringers in of new and strange Doctrines?" Acts xvii. 19, 20. Doubtless, the Objection is either false; or if true, is a Jest; in regard Error is no better for being old; nor Truth worse for being new: But properly speaking, no Scripture doctrinal Truth can be new; tho' it may be newly found, after it had long lain hid in the Rubbish of Popish Ignorance and Error. And the World and Churches are much beholden to those Men, who, by hard and faithful Labours, endeavour to bring sacred, useful Truth into Light; which, if it have but a fair Field, will keep its Ground, and at length obtain a Victory; after Ignorance and Bigotry, Malice, Envy and Ill-nature, false and mistaken Zeal have done their worst.

And had not the Holy Ghost Skill enough to speak even Things necessary, in tolerable intelligible Phrase? Who are they who are wiser to reform it!

2. Almost all Words are ambiguous, and may be diversely understood: Mens invented Expositions will be as liable to be wrested as Scripture: It is ridiculous Presumption to talk of making any Laws, Professions, or Articles, which false Hereticks may not subscribe.

Objec. But what must all subscribe? Answ. We must subscribe, "That we believe all God's Word to be true; and all the true Canon of the Scripture to be his Word; and that we will faithfully endeavour to discern all the Canon, and the true Meaning of it."

Baxter's True and only Way of Conc. Part II. p. 277. Part III. p. 135. Abridgment of his Life, Vol. I. p. 121.

B.

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B. It grows late, Sir, and I am unwilling to detain you any longer. As your Pains and Patience with me have been very great, I hope they are not without some good Effect. Tho' I cannot yet come into all your Sentiments, I shall ever entertain a Respect for sincere and good Men, how much soever they differ from me in their Way of Thinking in disputed Points.

C. As I always had a good Opinion of your Honesty; I am glad our Conversation has tended to increase your Moderation and Candour.

May the Period hasten for a *new Reformation*, wherein our Holy Lord will, (as it is likely he will) in some degree, reject all the *Parties* of Christians at this Day in the World; and form a *new People* of the good Men of the several Parties, who shall unite in the Articles of their Goodness, and sweetly bear with one another in their lesser Differences, leaving each other to the Divine Illumination*.

B. I heartily concur with you in your pious Wishes and Hope; and now bid you good Night.

C. The same to you, Friend.

* Cotton Mather's Letter from Boston in New England, 1717.



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